

Farmers' Garden



SUNNY SIDE SERIES.

THE
Secret Sorrow.

BY
MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING.

J. S. OGILVIE
Publisher.
57 ROSE STREET,
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THE Secret Sorrow.

BY

MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,

*Author of "Carried by Storm," "One Night's Mystery," "A
Wonderful Woman."*

THE SUNNYSIDE SERIES, No. 1. Issued Monthly. September, 1890. \$3.00 per year. Entered
at New York Post-Office as second-class matter. Copyright, 1890, by J. S. Ogilvie.

NEW YORK :
J. S. OGILVIE, PUBLISHER,
57 ROSE STREET.



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THE SECRET SORROW.

CHAPTER I.

THE STORM AND THE TRAVELERS.

“ The night is blind with a double dark,
The rain and hail come down together ;
’Tis good to sit by the fire and hark
To the stormy weather.”—*Edith May.*

’TWAS night, and the spirit of the storm had spread its sable wings over the earth. Dark, ominous clouds came rolling over the heavens—the rain fell in torrents, as if the flood-gates of heaven had opened for a second deluge. The cold, raw wind came sweeping chillingly along, driving the rain in maddening splashes against the closed window of a carriage that drove as rapidly as the pitiless storm would admit.

The carriage windows were shut down tightly—not a single ray of light came from the interior, and yet it was lighted up. A lamp suspended from the top illumined it, and shone full upon its inmates—three in number.

The eldest of these was a man apparently about fifty years of age. Every thing around and about him bespoke the gentleman. His iron-gray hair was brushed back from a lofty, massive brow, and a pair of cold keen, dark eyes flashed be-

neath, while the thick, bushy eyebrows, meeting across the strong Roman nose, gave him a repulsive, and somewhat sinister appearance. His features, taken separately, were decidedly good ; but there was an air of cold, proud sternness about the firmly-closed lips, and cruel, crafty cunning in his eyes, that would have instantly repelled any thing like confidence.

His hat was slouched down over his face, and he wore a long cloak, that covered him from head to foot. He was evidently of superior rank—a man to be feared and respected, but not loved.

The second was a young girl, bright, blooming, and rosy—looking strangely out of place with that dark, stern man. Her face was one of those pleasant, cheery ones, that seemed formed only for smiles ; but there was a cloud hanging over it now—particularly whenever her eyes rested on the third and last occupant of the carriage.

This was evidently a woman, but muffled in such a manner that no feature was visible. Her head was sunk low on her breast ; and her hands, small, white, and lady-like, lay listlessly in her lap. Her dress, where it could be seen for the large mantle in which it was enveloped, was rich ; and there was an air of grace and refinement about her, which at once bespoke the lady.

All was silent. The cold, stern features of the man at times, twitched convulsively, as though absorbed in painful thought ; and the eyes of the young girl, who was evidently an upper servant, would linger with a look of anxious trouble on the muffled figure, but neither spoke—

Meantime the storm was every moment increasing. Wilder and wilder came the fierce raw gusts of wind, driving the rain furiously against the coach. Darker and darker it grew until all without was wrapped in a mantle of pitchy blackness. Thicker and thicker drifted the huge storm clouds over the face of the heavens, until all above and below lay enveloped in the same shroud of intense gloom.

Still on through the storm went the carriage. Over the rough roads, where the creaking sign-boards and shutters flapped wildly in the wind; where people, comfortably housed, looked out in wonder, as the coach flew by—wondering where it could be going that dreadful night; until the city with its rough roads and difficult streets, was left far behind, and the wide, open country lay before them. Still, on—on—they went, and every moment the storm increased.

Suddenly there came a flash, as if the whole heavens were one vast sheet of flame, followed by a crash so stunning, so terrible, that it seemed as if the whole earth were annihilated. The young girl sprang to her feet with a stifled shriek. At the same moment the carriage stopped, and the head of the driver was protruded through the window.

“My lord,” said he, addressing the gentleman, “it is impossible for me to go any further to-night. The moor is right before us; and it will be dangerous for us to venture!”

“No matter!” said the gentleman, sternly, “drive on!”

The man closed the window, and whipped up his horses for another effort. For a few moments they sped madly on,

then came a second blaze of lightning, blinding and stunning, followed by a peal so tremendous, that it seemed to shake the very foundation of the earth. The horses stood for a moment stock-still, then they began to rear and plunge so furiously, that it required all the driver's strength to hold them in. At last they grew quiet. The man opened the window once more.

"We can go no further to-night, my lord!" he said resolutely: "the horses are nearly wild already with fear. We must alight, and seek for some place of shelter until the storm is over.

"Shelter!" repeated the gentleman; "and what shelter can we find here on the moor?"

"I don't know sir; but may be——"

"Ha! I have it now!" exclaimed his master, rising abruptly; "the old Moor Manor House, as they call it, must be somewhere near this. Is it not?"

"Yes, my lord, within a few yards. But you will never think of going there, sir, surely!" replied the man, in a tone of dismay.

"And why not, sirrah?" demanded his master, sternly; "you say we cannot move on any further; and we are to remain here exposed to the storm all night?"

"But it is—is—*haunted*, my lord!" said the driver, perplexed and anxious.

"Pshaw! you fool! attend to the horses, and I will go on foot and see it." And as he spoke, he leaped from the carriage and was lost in the deepening gloom.

“Janie,” said the driver, turning to the girl, who had stood listening in breathless anxiety, “what’s to be done? It will be dreadful to stay this wild night in the old Moor Manor, and the earl’s determined to stay, I can see that plainly. What’s to be done?”

“Oh! I don’t know!” replied the girl, wringing her hands in distress; “it is a dreadful place to stay, I know, but we cannot remain here. Lord preserve us! what lightning! Oh! my poor, dear young lady!” said the girl, turning to the figure still lying silently back in a corner of the coach. “how is she to stay in that old haunted place? Surely no evil spirit will come near her—so good, so patient, and so sorrowful. Oh, John! I would not be the Earl of Danemore this night for all the wealth he owns. What a fearful account he will yet have to render for his cruelty to poor Miss Alice!”

“Yes, and to young Lord Arndale too. Now, I’ll tell you what, Janie. If he was my father, as he is Lord Arndale’s, I would just go and marry Miss Alice there in spite of his teeth!” and John clenched his fist emphatically.

“She wouldn’t have him, John. Miss Alice never would marry him against his father’s will. Poor thing! she loves him so well, too!” And the eyes of the affectionate girl filled with tears, as she turned to gaze on her mistress.

“Hush! here he comes,” said John in a low voice, as the earl approached.

“John!” said the earl, in his cold, harsh voice, “come down, and lead the horses to the old Manor. You can easily

find a place for them there, Janie, I will carry your mistress; you can follow me. Be careful, the moor is dangerous!"

He raised, as he spoke, the muffled figure in his arms as easily as he would an infant, and walked cautiously across the wet manor, closely followed by Janie.

"This is the place," said the earl, at length, stopping before something that looked in the bleak darkness like a huge, grim, spectral shadow.

Just at this moment there came a blaze of lightning that showed the outlines of a large, ruinous pile of uneven buildings.

It was gone in a moment, and all was again enveloped in intense blackness.

"John" said the earl, as the driver approached, leading the horses, "there is a lamp in the carriage. Hand it to Janie."

The man obeyed.

"Now," said he to the girl, "go on ahead so that I may see the way. There is the door; go on."

Janie shrank back from the dark, open portal, that yawned like a great, black gulf to receive her. But she dare not disobey her stern master; and with a muttered prayer for safety, she entered the large, desolate room, followed by the earl and the lady.

CHAPTER II.

THE MIDNIGHT SPECTER.

“Avaunt and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless! thy blood is cold!
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes,
Which thou dost glare with.”—*Shakespeare.*

The three entered the room. Janie paused in the middle of the floor, raised her lamp, and all gazed with an undefined feeling of awe around.

The room was large, long, and lofty. Two high gothic windows stood on each side, through which the lightning blazed at regular intervals. A huge fire-place, that looked like the entrance into Hades—so black and ominous was it—filled the upper end of the room. There was no furniture, not even a stool—and the place had a damp, earthy smell, as of the grave.

For some moments all stood silent, regarding the desolate ruin. Janie was the first to speak.

“Oh, my lord!” she cried, wildly, “pray, pray, let us go on. I would rather take my chance out in the storm than stay in this dreadful place.”

“Nonsense, girl,” said the earl, sternly; “you are perfectly safe here, and should be glad to have found such a shelter from the storm.”

“But Miss Alice, sir,” pleaded Janie, “she will die in this awful place. It smells like death now.”

“No fear of her,” was the gruff reply.

“But there is not even a fire or a seat for her,” persisted Janie, with something very like anger in her usually gentle voice.

“She shall have both,” said the earl; “sit down on the floor and support her for the present, until there is a fire made. It will drive away this earthy smell.”

Janie seated herself on the ground, and received tenderly in her arms the slight figure of the lady. John immediately after made his appearance, having seen the horses properly sheltered.

“John,” said his master, “go and find some wood, and make a fire; you can get plenty through those old rooms. Make haste now,” and he quitted the room as he spoke.

In a few moments both returned; John bearing in his arms a load of wood, and the earl, the carriage cushions and pillows. These he spread on the ground, and laid the lady upon them. Then he took off his cloak, and spread it over her.

During all this time she had suffered herself to be raised and carried like a child, without a word or an effort at resistance. Now she lay with her face hidden in the pillows, as still and motionless as a corpse laid out for burial.

John had succeeded in kindling a fire, which now blazed brightly up the huge chimney; but vainly strove to dispel the lurking shadows that filled the lofty room.

This done, he went in search of more wood. Janie seated

herself in the chimney-corner, the earl stood opposite, both gazing into the fire, absorbed in their own reflections. At times both would glance at the still figure on the floor, then Janie's eyes would flash angrily as they rested on her master, whose knitted brow, gloomy looks and compressed lips showed how deeply he was agitated.

The storm, meanwhile, seemed still increasing. The lightning glared, the thunder crashed, the rain fell in torrents, and the wind swept wildly through the empty chambers of Moor Manor, waking a thousand echoes, that sounded, to the ears of the startled watchers, like shrieks of pain and horror.

John had gathered wood enough to last all night, and now he entered and took his seat beside Janie. For a while both were silent, out of respect for their master; but as the silence grew oppressive, Janie inquired, more to drive away the superstitious fears that were creeping over her, than from curiosity :

“John, why is this old place deserted? Who owns it?”

“I don't know who owns it now,” replied John, evidently glad to find an opportunity to break the dismal silence. “It was formerly owned by Sir Daro Sinclair, but *that* family of Sinclairs are all dead and gone now.”

“Ah! and so the old place was sold?”

“Yes—no; not exactly. You see the way of it was this: Sir Daro was one of the most awful wicked men that ever lived. Every night this place used to be filled with all sorts of riotous scamps—hail fellows well met—and he was the

worst of them all. His father, and grandfather, and forefathers, from the days of Noah, lived here, but somehow the old Manor came to him heavily mortgaged. Sir Daro could not do without money; so, night after night, with a mask on his face, he used to go out as a highwayman, and rob all he met. At last he was discovered and arrested, found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged. He escaped—none knew how—fled hither, and defied them all to take him again. 'Tis said he sold himself to Satan, on condition that he would save him from being hanged. I suppose the old boy kept his promise, for he was never again taken by the law. But, one wild night, just such a night as this it must have been, when, seated by his boon companions, as the clock struck twelve, Satan appeared in their midst, and carried him off bodily. 'Tis said his cries were heard for miles around. The rest all fled in horror, and never came near Moor Manor again. Since then it has been deserted; for every night, it is said, his ghost appears, and when the clock strikes one, vanishes amid a cloud of fire, with such awful cries that even the wild animals that haunt the moor fly in terror."

John's voice had dropped to a hoarse whisper as he went on. Janie listened with bloodless face, and eye dilated with horror. Even the earl grew pale, and drew nearer the speaker, with something like an undefined feeling of awe.

When he ceased, a dead silence fell on them all, while they gazed on each other's faces with hearts throbbing wildly with fear. They seemed to see mocking faces and spirits of the

dead in the blue glare of the lightning, and to hear cries of agony in the maniac shrieks of the wind. Voices and creatures not of this world seemed flitting in thousands by them in the gloom. The fire had burned low on the hearth, yet no one moved to replenish it.

Suddenly, Janie arose to her feet; her eyes fixed, as if fascinated, on the opposite wall, and slowly dilating, until they seemed about to start from their sockets. Every drop of blood had fled from her face, as she stood pointing, with one finger, in motionless horror.

Both turned their eyes in the direction to which she pointed.

The room was, for a moment, enveloped in profound, pitchy darkness. A figure, clothed in garments of fire dripping with blood, glided across the room. A low, unearthly groan came from its fleshless jaws as it turned round, disclosing the eyeless sockets and grinning skull of a skeleton.

It passed them; a vivid flash of lightning blazed for a moment—still it glided, on and vanished, with an unearthly cry, through the opposite wall.

A shriek, a terrible shriek, burst from Janie's lips, as she bounded forward and fell with a deadly swoon, on the floor.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONSULTATION.

“When will the unwelcome, weary days be done?
Time loiters ever when we’d have him fly.”— *Anon.*

THE cold, gray dawn of morning came faintly through the high gothic windows, festooned with cobwebs that had never been stirred for years. The great empty room looked even more dreary and chill in the foggy morning light than it had done the night before. She who had been called Miss Alice lay on the floor, where she had been placed upon entering as immovable as ever. By her side lay Janie, sleeping the deep dreamless sleep of bodily and mental exhaustion. At a short distance sat John, dozing in fitful starts, and rousing himself up again in alarm, as he remembered the fearful apparition of the preceding night. Opposite him sat the earl, cold, calm, and stern as ever, with his eyes fixed intently on the red dying embers. No sleep had visited his eyes. When the mind is troubled, we heed not bodily want.

For more than an hour after day dawn the party remained thus; then, as the dim light grew stronger and stronger, until every object in the room was clearly discernable, the earl arose, walked to the window, and gazed thoughtfully out.

The storm of the previous night had not yet ceased. The

lightning no longer flashed, nor did the thunder peal ; but the rain still fell heavily, and the wild blasts yet swept fiercely around the manor. The sky was one mass of dull, leaden clouds, and the moor was so wet and slippery as to be nearly impassable.

The earl gazed out for a while with an anxious, troubled brow. Suddenly his face lighted up like one who has received some new idea. He walked over to John, who yet slumbered fitfully in his seat, and touching him on the shoulder, said, in the harsh abrupt, tone that seemed habitual to him :

“ Wake up, man ! don’t stay here dozing all day ! Rouse ! ” and he shook him roughly.

John rubbed his eyes, and after two or three efforts rose to his feet, and stood awaiting his master’s orders.

“ John,” said he “ go and saddle Black Bess. I am going to the city now, and may not return till dark. Be quick, man ! ”

“ Surely, my lord ” said John, in alarm, “ you are not going to leave us here alone, in this horrid place, where there are nothing but ghosts and devils ! ”

“ Pooh, pooh, man ! that affair last night was all fancy. That apparition was merely the effect of an over-excited imagination. Your wild legend frightened you, nothing more ! ”

“ But, my lord, it could not be imagination,” persisted John. “ We all saw it, *you* know that, and I would rather not stay here, my lord ! ”

“ Coward ! ” exclaimed the earl, bitterly. “ I might have known it. However, look about you. Do you think I could bring *her*,” pointing to the lady, “ out in such a storm. You’re

crazy, man ! Then even if, as you say, there are ghosts here, they will not trouble you in the day-time, and if they did, and I here, what good could I do you ? There, not a word now ! Do as I bid you !”

John dared not disobey longer. He saw the sudden flash of the eye that convinced him his master was not to be trifled with. Besides, he began to feel a little ashamed of his cowardice ; and the dread of ghosts in daylight and after night are two quite different things.

“ Black Bess is ready, sir,” he said, returning after a few minutes ; “ what are we to do till you return ?”

“ Do nothing was the brief reply, “ remain where you are. Admit no one. It is not likely, however, any one will pass this way ; but if they should, and wish to enter here, see that you prevent them. Attend to her,” and he pointed to the lady ; “ keep the fire burning, and remain within doors. The provisions intended for the journey are in the carriage. Use them freely. That is all. I will faithfully return before dark ; and beware if I find my directions disobeyed !”

As he spoke he sprang upon his horse, gave him the spur, and was bounding away a moment after across the moor.

John stood in the door-way, gazing after him with a look of sullen discontent.

“ Ay, there you go, as large as life,” he muttered, “ after performing such a villainous deed last night. You’ll go back to Dirritole now, as grand and proud as ever, and have a good time and no one will ever suspect that *you* stole away poor Miss Desmond. Her poor old father, too, what will he

do? Ah, you gray-haired old sinner!" and he shook his fist after him spitefully, "won't there come a day of reckoning yet for all this? No wonder the dead can't rest in their graves when you're around! You aren't content with driving your eldest son to the grave, but you must drive poor Master Harry there, too. Well, we'll see! It will go hard with me, anyhow, if I don't find means to let him know where Mistress Alice is."

And thus apostrophising the object of his indignation, John entered the room where the two young girls lay.

His first care was to fasten the door securely; not that there was much danger of visitors; but John thought it better, for the present, to follow his master's directions. His next was to approach, stir up the fire, and pile on more wood. This done, he seated himself and took up his nap and dreams where they had been interrupted by his impatient master. But John's rest seemed destined to be woefully broken this eventful morning. This time it was by Janie, who, on waking, found herself chilled with lying on the damp floor, and seeing the fire burning so pleasantly, had arisen. Not wishing to be alone with her own thoughts in such a place, she woke up John to keep her company.

Had it been any one else than pretty Janie who awoke him so unceremoniously, John would have been inclined to resent such a freedom, but he had long felt a very tender regard for that young lady, so he only stretched himself two or three times, gave several jaw-splitting yawns, and his sleeping was over for that day.

"Where's the earl, John?" was Janie's first question.

"Gone back to the city, to Dirritole, I suppose."

"Oh, John!" ejaculated Janie, in surprise and consternation, "and when is he coming back? Aren't we going, too. Surely we will not have to stay here another night?"

"Yes, we will then," said honest John, bluntly. "Master said for us to wait here, and he would return before dark. So I suppose we are to stay here to-night."

"But I thought he said we were going to Stanton with Miss Alice, and that's thirty miles from here at least," said Janie, the look of perplexity increasing on her pretty face.

"Well, maybe he has changed his mind. Anyway, we are not going to-day, nor to-night. I'm sure of *that*," said John.

"Well, then, *I* shan't stay. I'll go away myself, if he won't. Does he think we're crazy to stay in this horrid, haunted, old tumble-down place another night?"

"That's just what he said to me when I asked him about leaving; he said he would be crazy to go in such a storm."

"Humph!" said Janie, "how mighty careful he's grown of us all of a sudden. What made him to start last night in such a storm, I wonder, if he's afraid of the rain to-day? I tell you what, John Jones, there's something wrong about this, more than you or I understand. What made him in such a desperate hurry to take off Miss Alice last night? And what puzzles me most of all, she came with him willingly, though she never could endure him before. I don't see into 't all."

"Why," said John, "you don't mean to say that she came with him of her own accord, do you!"

“Yes, I do,” said Janie. “You see, as I said, she always disliked him, as he was so short, and snappish, and cross like. Well, yesterday morning, he came over to the Pines, and inquired for Miss Alice. She was up in her own room, reading. I was with her, combing her hair, and she had not seemed so light-hearted for a long while before. When the servant came in and said the earl wanted her, she looked quite frightened, and asked if I was alone. Betty said yes, so Alice went down to the library where he was. She was away about two hours, and when she came back, John, I declare I nearly dropped down with fright, she looked so awful white and ghastly. She never spoke one word, but dropped right down in her chair, and covered her face with her hands. I spoke to her several times, but she didn’t seem to hear me, and at last I left her to herself, thinking she might wish to be alone. A little before dark she sent for me to her room. I started back when I went in, she looked so unlike herself—she was just as white as a ghost—as the ghost we saw last night, John. She rose up as I came in—for she had been lying on the sofa—and seeing how frightened I looked, she smiled, oh! how sadly, and beckoned me to her. I went over and knelt beside her, and she laid her hand on my head, and said, in her own soft, sweet voice :

“You love me, Janie, do you not?”

“‘Oh, my dear, dear mistress, you *know* I do,’ and she looked so pale, and lovely, and sad, that I felt the tears falling from my eyes on her hand.

“‘And I love you, too, dear Janie,’ said she (we are foster-

sisters, you know, John) 'and now I want you to do me a favor.'

"A favor, Miss Alice,' said I surprised. 'What is it?'

" 'I want you to go over to Dirritole, and take this note to Lord Arndale,' and her voice faltered as she spoke his name, 'and then find the earl, and tell him you are ready to accompany him. He will bring you back here in his carriage. I am going on a journey to-night, Janie, and I want you to accompany me.'

" 'A journey, Miss Alice,' said I; 'where to?'

" 'I will tell you again,' she said faintly, 'and in the meantime you must keep it a secret, even from my father. Not even he, Janie, must know of my absence till to-morrow. I will leave a note to tell him. Go now.'

" She waved her hand for me to go. I took the note and started for Dirritole. It was pouring rain, and it was dark as pitch when I reached it. Just as I went into the hall, dripping wet, I met the earl face to face. The note for Lord Arndale was in my hand, where I had held it as I came along, to keep it from getting wet.

" 'Who is this for,' said he, fixing his eyes on me in his stern, piercing manner.

" 'For lord Arndale, my lord,' said I, all of a flutter, for I always was afraid of him, he looked so harsh and cold.

" 'Give it to me, then,' said he. 'I will deliver it to him.' And, before I could refuse, he had taken it out of my hand.

" I was too frightened to say anything, so I merely stammered out Miss Alice's message.

“‘Yes,’ said he, ‘I will be ready in a moment. Step in here while I hand this note to Arndale.’

“I went into a little dark room; I waited about five minutes when he returned and told me to follow him. We passed out to where the carriage stood without meeting any one. We drove, as you remember, to the outer gate at the Pines, where Miss Alice met us, got in, and has never spoken a single word since. Poor, dear, young lady!” said Janie, wiping her eyes as she ceased speaking.

“Well,” said John, thoughtfully, “that shows she did come without being forced. Yet there’s something wrong about it. Master told me he wanted me for very particular business, and as I’d been in the family so long, he thought he could trust me. He said all I had to do was to drive where he directed, keep silent about the matter, and he would make me comfortable for life. It looks like bribery, don’t it, Janie.”

“Yes, John, and I wish Miss Alice was safe at home again. I don’t like this business at all. The earl is a strange man, John, and I know he is anxious to get Miss Alice out of his son’s way. Hark! what’s that?” she exclaimed, springing to her feet in alarm, as the sound of footsteps overhead came distinctly to their ears.

“It sounds like some one walking” doesn’t it?” said John, growing white with fear.

“Oh, good Heaven! it must be the ghost!” gasped Janie, clinging to her companion in horror.

Both listened intently for some moments, but all was profoundly silent again.

"It must have been the wind," said John, drawing a long breath; "all's still now."

Again they listened, but nothing met their ears save the howling of the wind.

"Yes, it was the wind—nothing else," said John, with renewed confidence. "We're easily scared here, Janie. There, don't be afraid, I'll go and bring in something for breakfast. Perhaps your young lady may take something."

John went out, leaving Janie trembling with fear; even the fire seemed to chill her now, she shivered so convulsively. In a few moments John appeared again, bearing the materials for a good meal.

"Here," he said, with an effort at gayety; "we won't starve at any rate. Help yourself, Janie."

"I don't want any, thank you; I cannot eat here; but perhaps Miss Alice may. I'll give her this."

And she poured some wine in a glass.

"Here, Miss Alice," she said, stooping down over the prostrate figure, "here is some wine for you—drink it."

"No, no, take it away, I don't want any," murmured the faint voice of the lady. "Let me alone."

"But you must take it, dear Miss Alice," said Janie. "Do—for my sake, now."

And she passed an arm under her shoulders and lifted her up. As she did so, the heavy cloak fell back, displaying a pale, sweet face. A shower of golden hair fell rippling down her back. She raised her eyes—large, liquid, hazel eyes—to Janie's face, and said, faintly:

“I don’t want it, Janie. Take it away.”

“Now, Miss Alice,” said Janie, decidedly, “you *must* take it. You must eat something, if you expect to live. Here, drink this wine at least,” and she held it to her lips.

Finding there was no escape, the lady drank it, then pushing away the offered food, she said, sadly :

“Janie, I cannot take it. Let me alone, now—*please* do?”

She raised the wistful brown eyes so pleadingly, that Janie could not refuse. With a sigh she arose and took her seat in the chimney-corner again, and watched John, whose fear of ghosts seemed in no way to have diminished his appetite.

“Here’s some excellent ham, Janie,” said John, “as you said yourself to Miss Alice just now, you can’t expect to live without eating.”

Janie smiled faintly, but shook her head.

“Not now, John; I’ll eat by and by if I feel hungry. Meantime let us think of some plan to deliver Miss Alice from the earl’s power.”

John carefully stowed away the remains of his breakfast, out of reach of the ghosts, replenished the fire, and sat down beside Janie to consult what was to be done.

The weary hours dragged slowly, very slowly on, to the two sitting by the fire, awaiting the approach of night with beating hearts.

CHAPTER IV.

LADY DANEMORE.

Can'st thou no kindly ray impart,
Thou strangely beauteous one?
Fairer than fairest work of art,
Yet cold as sculptured stone?"—*Ordway.*

MEANWHILE, through the splashing rain, over the soft, wet, boggy moor, galloped the earl. The moor was passed, the flat open plain lay before him, a few straggling cots appeared in view, the hum of busy life came already to his ear.

A few hard-working peasants, on their way to their day's toil, looked up in surprise as the horse flew past. It was an unusual thing to see a horseman riding at such a pace across the moor at that early hour of morning. At last the earl became conscious that he was attracting observation, which of all things he wished most to avoid, and dropping the rein upon the horse's neck, he leaned his head upon his breast, and gave way to his reflections. They were far from pleasant, as might be seen in the frequent knitting of his brow, and the convulsive twitching of his lips.

"It must be so," he muttered, at length, unconsciously aloud. "She must remain in the old Moo. Manor for the present at least. I did intend conveying her to Stanton, and

secreting her there, but my absence at the same time with her may excite suspicion, which I particularly wish to avoid. Those servants, too, cowardly fools! may give me trouble, by refusing to remain with her there, for fear of ghosts. That phantom last night—what could it mean? The place has long borne the reputation of being haunted, but I am not fool enough to believe any such ridiculous nursery tale as that. Some one must act the ghost to frighten people away. Yet it cannot be inhabited; no one would dwell in such a tumble-down, desolate place. I shall have it thoroughly searched, however, and if convinced there is no one there, I shall take care that those servants *do* stay with Alice Desmond, at least until they can be safely disposed of elsewhere.”

He paused for a moment, and putting spurs to his horse, rode rapidly along, then gradually resumed his former easy trot, and muttered, like one whose mind is made up:

“Yes, it must be done. I am sorry, for the sake of both, that I am obliged to resort to such extreme measures; but it cannot be helped. Arndale shall *never* marry the daughter of Hugh Desmond. In him are centered all my hopes now. Had Walter lived, the case would have been different. Henry might then have married, if he chose to be such a fool, a girl without fortune; but never, even then, should he wed one in whose veins ran a drop of the Desmond blood. Now, however, the idea of his marrying a portionless wife is simply, utterly, and decidedly *impossible*. He must and shall marry one whose fortunes at least equals his own. And now for Dirritole.”

As he ceased speaking, he rode rapidly forward, and soon left the moor far behind.

Three hours' hard riding brought him to his journey's end, and he drew rein before the outer gate of the noble estate of Dirritole. A groom in waiting took charge of his horse; and the earl turned slowly and thoughtfully up a shaded avenue that led to the house. The family mansion of Dirritole was a quaint, large, old-fashioned building of dark gray stone, with peaked turrets, sloping gable, and deep bay-windows. There was a still, quiet, stagnant air of repose about the place, that spoke well for the gravity of its occupants. Even Stag, the lazy old mastiff, had an air of dignified reserve about him, which he had probably learned from his betters, as he walked slowly up to salute his master.

The earl went up a flight of stone steps that led to the hall. There were doors opening on either side, and into one of these, on the left of the hall, he entered.

The room was large, and splendidly furnished. A rich velvet carpet, wreathed with flowers and buds, so natural that one hesitated to advance, for fear of crushing them, covered the floor. The ceiling was fantastically and gracefully decorated with oriental tracery of raised gold on a blue ground. The walls were covered with paintings, rare gems of art—many of them worth their weight in gold. Statues and busts of exquisite finish were carelessly, yet with artistic taste, scattered around. Heavy curtains of crimson-damask draped the lofty window, and cast a pleasant rose-hued light through the apartment. The air was heavy with the perfume

breathed from a vase of rare exotics that stood on the marble table.

But by far the fairest sight in that gorgeous room was its mistress. She lay languidly back in the large arm chair, half buried in a pile of soft cushions ; the mellow light falling like a halo on her regal brow. The jet-black hair was braided in heavy plaits around her finely-formed head, seeming a striking contrast to the pearly whiteness of her face. Not a single trace of color was perceptible, save a faint tint on the exquisitely-chiseled lips. The large, shadowy black eyes were cast downwards, and the long, jetty lashes rested on the pearly cheeks. Her small, white hands lay folded, with a weary, listless air, in her lap, and altogether "my lady" wore a sad, lonely air, that one would hardly expect to see on the face of the proud and beautiful Countess of Danemore. And yet it was its usual expression—few people could boast of ever having seen a smile on the fair face of the Mistress of Dirritole. Very seldom were those white lids raised from above the dusky, shadowy eyes, seemingly dragged down by the weight of the long, black lashes. The thin lips were compressed with a hard, bitter expression, strangely out of place on the face of one so young and beautiful. During the six long years which had passed since she had first crossed the threshold of Dirritole as its mistress, no one could say they had ever seen the faintest trace of any emotion on that calm, pallid face. No light ever arose to those deep, dark eyes ; the fire which must have once burned there seemed to have gone out forever, in the dim, dark clouds of some un

known sorrow. Smiles were rare visitors to those beautiful lips, coming now and then like rare flashes of light across that shadowy face; coming for a moment and lingering with a mournful sweetness, far sadder to see than even her usual cold, passionless manner, and again vanishing like the fleeting glance of a moonbeam on the snow. The proud world sometimes condescended to wonder what could have ever changed my lady into the calm statue she was; and yet changed is hardly the word—no one could remember to have ever seen her otherwise. With the heavy lashes ever drooping downward over those mournful black eyes, my lady brooded in silence over the past hidden from all other eyes. She sat now in her usual position, with her hands folded quietly together in her lap; her eyes fixed intently on the carpet, as if studying its figure, without the slightest expression on the quiet face to betoken of what she sat musing so intently.

Respectfully, almost reverentially, the earl advanced toward her, and, stooping, touched lightly with his lips the broad, white brow of the lady. The large eyes were for a moment raised from the floor and fixed on his face; but no sparkle of pleasure shone in them at his appearance; one little hand was extended and laid in his, as in a low, musical voice she murmured:

“Welcome home, my lord.”

The strong foreign accent with which my lady spoke, at once proved her to be a foreigner—as, indeed, any one might guess from the peculiar style of her beauty. This done with

an evident effort, the small hands were again folded, the dreamy eyes again sought the floor, and the countess was lost once more in that dream-land in which she lived—that mysterious shore which no eye sees but her own.

For a moment the earl stood behind her chair, gazing down fondly yet longingly into that still beautiful face. Perhaps he, too, was longing to draw away the veil that had hid the thoughts of his wife. One would scarcely recognize, with the tender, subdued expression his face now wore, the hard, stern, cruel tyrant of the night before.

A strange contrast they both formed in that splendid room—he so tall, harsh, and forbidding, with his iron-gray hair, and the deep curves and lines that age, trouble, or remorse, perhaps, had stamped there. She so young, so beautiful, so desolate, and lonely-looking, as if all that had ever made earth dear to her had gone forever. People wondered sometimes why she had ever married one old enough to be her father, and who had already a son older than herself, but no one ever presumed to question either. The earl was too much feared, and no one, not even the boldest, presumed to ask the countess. Without speaking a word—without even raising her eyes—she commanded involuntary homage. In vain they wondered and inwardly chafed at it; in spite of themselves, they would involuntarily hold their breath when she spoke, and reply in tones strangely low and subdued.

Suddenly the earl's meditations were brought to an end by the uncereemonious opening of the parlor door, and a young lady entered. The new-comer might be about twenty years

of age, of middle size, with a fine, sweet figure, and peculiarly graceful carriage, albeit her only pretensions to beauty. Her face was far from handsome—not even pretty; and the haughty, erect form—the bold, high brow—the firm, resolute compression of her lips, and the decided, almost stern expression of her features bespoke a pride unsubdued—a resolute, unbending, not to say obstinate will; and an energy and determination not to be shaken. Yet still she was not homely; in fact, the general opinion formed of Kate Sidney was that she was a plain, yet graceful and lady-like woman, with rather more energy and firmness than usually falls to the lot of the daughters of Eve, and of rather an obstinate turn of mind; but that was a failing inherent in her mother's family.

Kate Sidney was an orphan. Her mother had been a sister to the Earl of Danemore; but she, as well as her husband (who was colonel of a regiment), had died ere Kate had attained the age of fifteen. As the orphan, or rather orphans (for Kate had a brother one year younger than herself), were poor and friendless, having no relations from whom they could claim a home, save himself, the earl had taken them both; and Kate Sidney and her brother Charley, had, ever since that time, found a home at Dirritole.

Though naturally of an affectionate disposition, and really loving her uncle, Miss Sidney was an exceedingly undemonstrative young lady; she, therefore, passed him with a slight but respectful bow, saying, quietly:

“ You have returned sooner than we expected. uncle; I be-

lieve you told us you were not coming back for a week at least."

"Such was my intention," replied the earl, calmly; "but I found it necessary to make some change in the business which called me from home. As I did not go as far as I intended at starting, I fancied taking a ride over here this morning, to see if last night's storm did any damage. I shall be obliged to leave this evening again."

"What a terrible night last night was! The lightning was really awful. It must have been dreadful for any one to be out. I could hardly rest all night for fancying you might be exposed to it."

This was a home thrust; and had Kate chanced to look up into her uncle's face as he spoke, she might have seen the sudden start he gave, and the guilty look that rested on his countenance.

For the earl, harsh and cruel though he was, had not yet become so deeply involved in guilt as to listen to the voice of conscience without some slight feeling of remorse. Kate, however, did not notice his look; but turning to the window, gazed out with a rather dissatisfied air.

"Rain! rain! drizzle! drizzle! will it *never* stop, I wonder!" she exclaimed in a slightly impatient voice. "Here I have been wanting to visit the Pines all this week and have not been able to stir out of doors for the rain; but I am determined to go to-day, whether it rains or not." And Miss Kate looked resolutely out, as if determined to convince the weather that her mind was made up not to be altered.

“Why, is there anything wrong there that you are so anxious to go?” inquired the earl, in an indifferent tone, though a spectator might have seen the concealed nervousness of his manner.

“Oh! no; but it is two whole weeks since I have seen Alice, and she has not even sent me a message, I must go and refresh her memory, or else she will forget me altogether. And by the way, my lord,” she added, suddenly; “when does Lord Arndale return home?”

The earl, who stood leaning with one hand resting on the back of my lady’s chair, started violently at the abrupt mention of this son’s name, and answered, rather hastily:

“How do I know? In a few days, I suppose. I cannot give you an account of his comings and goings to the precise moment. Arndale is his own master.”

Kate looked up in her uncle’s face, and opened her eyes with astonishment at his angry look. The earl, however, did not choose to meet her eye, but turning away abruptly, was about to quit the room, when a servant entered with several letters, which had just arrived. The earl seized them, and throwing himself into an easy-chair, began with nervous haste to look at the superscriptions.

“Any for me?” inquired Kate, eagerly.

“No,” was the curt answer.

“Too bad, positively,” muttered Kate, turning again to the window, and glancing with a troubled look at the dull, gloomy sky. “Alice might write at least; she’s really unkind to forget her friends like this. But perhaps I do her

injustice—she may be ill, or something else may have prevented her, though, in any case, I think she might have sent Janie or some of them to let me know. It is very singular altogether, and I really begin to feel anxious; so let the weather be what it may, I will ride over to the Pines this very afternoon, and see what is the matter.”

The latter part of Kate's soliloquy was delivered in a low tone, not loud enough for the others to hear. As she ceased speaking, she turned from the window, and caught her uncle's eyes fixed upon her. In his hand he held an open letter, which he had just finished reading.

“Well, Miss Sidney,” said the earl, with a quiet sneer, “If you have done muttering to yourself, perhaps you will honor me with a few moment's attention.”

Kate looked a little surprised, and not altogether pleased at her uncle's style of remark, but she merely bowed, and stood waiting, in respectful silence, until he should again speak.

He glanced at the letter he held once more, then holding it up he said quietly :

“This letter is from a sister of mine in the United States. You may read it, as it explains itself better than I can do. I must promise, however, that the young lady of whom it speaks is my niece, her mother having been a sister of mine, consequently she is your cousin. You have doubtless heard of her before—this my dear,” went on the earl, in rather a kinder tone than he had yet used. “Her mother, as you are aware, married an American—one altogether beneath her, both in

wealth and station. With him she went to America ; and for a long time we heard nothing of her, as she had been cast off by the family eighteen years ago. Some time since, I received a letter from my sister, saying that her husband had died with the yellow fever, which was making great ravages in New Orleans, the city in which they resided. It furthermore stated, she had a daughter, sixteen years of age, depending on her, and that she was extremely poor. As I dislike family quarrels, and really felt an affection for Marie, I answered her letter immediately, inclosing a sum of money, and invited her to come back to England with her daughter—whose name, by the way, is Margaret Nelson. This invitation she has accepted, and—but the letter will explain the rest. Read it aloud, your aunt may perhaps wish to hear it.”

This was spoken inquiringly, and my lady, who had seemingly heard not a word of the foregoing speech, now raised for a moment her heavy eyelids, and bent her graceful head in token of acquiescence.

Kate took the letter her uncle extended to her, and read aloud :

“ MY DEAR BROTHER :—In compliance with your exceedingly kind invitation, I and my daughter are to start to-morrow for dear England, which I sincerely long to behold once more—though my home here has, until very lately, been exceedingly happy. Maggie is in raptures at the idea of visiting England, in fact, she seems perfectly wild with delight. However, this must be ascribed to the buoyant spirits of youth, although Maggie is different from most girls of her age. She is, I regret to say, exceedingly wild, and continually needs the most watchful care. The captain of the vessel in which we are to sail is a personal friend of mine, and he has kindly agreed to see us safely at our journey's end, so that you need not put yourself to any inconvenience in coming to meet

us. We bring with us a colored servant, Maggie's nurse, to whom she is extremely attached.

"With many thanks for your kindness, I remain,

"Your affectionate sister,

MARIE NELSON."

There was silence for a moment after the perusal of this letter. Both the earl and Kate looked dissatisfied, for both were far from delighted at the idea of having a wild hoiden (such as they concluded Miss Nelson to be), to disturb the calm and peaceful serenity of Dirritole. My lady's face wore its usual expression of utter listless indifference—like one who takes no interest whatever in the subject under discussion; nevertheless, it was her voice that first broke the silence.

"And this young lady will arrive in a few days, I presume," she said, quietly, without raising her eyes from the floor.

"I suppose so. In fact, I think she will arrived very shortly, for I see, by the date, the letter has been delayed," and the earl bit his lip impatiently; "and we will have our lives plagued out with this half-civilized Yankee, and her negro servant. If I had known she was such a hoiden, as I presume she is, from Marie's letter, I should have let her remain at home, for I have no idea of having every thing turned topsy-turvy for her. I suppose peace will fly at her arrival; at least the little that remains since the advent of that precious young scoundrel, Sidney. It won't do to have two such high-fliers here together. Charley must be sent off to Dublin, where he came from, as soon as the new-comer arrives. Eh, Kate?"

"As you please, my lord; it is quite immaterial to me," replied Kate, quietly.

"But it will hardly be courteous or hospitable, my lord,"

interposed the low, clear voice of my lady, "to treat this orphan girl as cavalierly as you propose doing, after she arrives. Consider she has no friends here, save yourself, and that she is your sister's daughter—even though she is somewhat wild; and wildness in youth is not a crime unpardonable."

It was seldom the countess uttered so many words at once, and so unusual was it for her to take the slightest interest in any subject that both the earl and Kate listened, surprised. Yet it could hardly be called an interest; not the slightest expression moved the marble-like face as she spoke, the snowy hands lay folded as listlessly as ever, the dark eyes were not once raised, yet those few words, spoken so quietly, almost indifferently, produced a deeper impression on the earl than if another had been pleading eloquently the case of the orphan for hours.

"Very well," he replied, with smiling courtesy, which no one could assume better than he when he chose, "your ladyship's will shall be my law, though it scarcely needed your words to make me remember the duties of hospitality. I trust no one beneath my roof will ever so far forget themselves as to treat with the slightest disrespect any guest of mine. Certainly *I* shall never set them the example." And with graceful ease he raised one of her little white hands to his lips, and turning on his heel strode from the room.

Kate lingered for a moment, gazing out at the murky sky; then, she too, turned and quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER V.

A CLEW TO THE LOST ONE.

“How can the glintin sun shine bright?
How can the wimplin burnie glide?
Or flowers adorn the ingle side?
Or birdies deign
The woods, and streams, and vales to chide?
Alice is gane.”—*J. W. H.*

KATE ran up to her own chamber, an elegantly furnished little apartment, and rang the bell. The summons was answered by a servant; and, having given direction to have her horse saddled and brought round to the gate, Kate Sidney slowly and thoughtfully proceeded to don her riding-habit. It was evidently not of Miss Maggie Nelson she was thinking, for Kate seldom troubled herself about strangers; she was, in fact, still striving to solve the puzzling question of her friend's conduct, and trying in vain to find some cause for her unusual silence. How little did she dream that Alice Desmond was at that moment lying on her rude couch in the old haunted Moor Manor.

Having completed her toilet, she descended the stairs, drawing on her gloves as she went. As she passed the open parlor-door, she glanced in. The countess lay back in her favorite position, gazing on the ground, as immovable as a

figure in wax-work. Kate watched her a moment, then, turning away with a half-muttered, "How singular Aunt Madeline is!" she tripped out into the hall. A sudden noise, proceeding from a room opening into the hall, attracted her attention. The door being ajar, Kate stepped softly forward, and looked in.

The room was in a state of the utmost disorder. Books, papers, cigar stumps, and a thousand and one miscellaneous articles lay scattered over the floor in every direction. Stretched at full length on a sofa, in the middle of the floor, and surrounded by a perfect chaos of disorder, was a young gentleman, quietly engaged in smoking a cigar. Tall, and finely formed in person, with a high, white forehead, dark chestnut hair, and beautiful dark-blue eyes, in which lurked a wicked, mischievous, dare-devil expression—Charley Sidney was decidedly handsome. Before him, on the present occasion, stood a prim, vinegar-visaged old maid, called Miss Dickett, the housekeeper of the family.

Now, as Kate well knew, the housekeeper was the very soul of neatness, and that the least speck of dust was sufficient to give her nervous system a severe shock; she rightly judged that the worthy virgin had entered to pour the vials of her wrath on the devoted head of Master Charley. Miss Dickett was a privileged person, and ruled with a rod of iron over the heads of every member of the family, save that of the earl's son, Lord Arndale, on whom she doted. Mr. Sidney, who was gesticulating with great force, had just ceased speaking as Kate approached. Neither of them noticed her,

and Miss Dickett went on, in reply to something the young gentleman had said :

“ Yes, it’s all very fine talking ; but I’m not going to put hup with no such dishorder, so I’m not. ’Ere’s this ’ere room hall hup in ’eaps, what isn’t not one bit o’ use for me to try to keep to rights, ’cause it’s *wuss* than hever the next minute, so it is. Hit’s my ’pinion you hasn’t got no more regard for my feelin’s, Master Charles, than if I wasn’t no more nor a hold happple-woman ; and has I told you before, fifty hundred thousand times, I wont put hup with hit, so I won’t.”

“ Well, but really, my dear madam,” began Master Charley, in an expostulatory tone, “ you see I am so deeply engaged in the study of the Greek classics at present that it’s impossible for me to attend to my housekeeping duties, as you yourself frequently and elegantly tell me I *hought*. Yes, ma’am,” continued the student, warming into enthusiasm, as he went on. “ Last night I encountered a passage in the fifty-eleventh book of Julius Cæsar (or some other old cove) a passage of sublime beauty ending, I believe, in “ *Moingal voins tunner ashang, aintsheaz tharmy let her rip bang*. It’s poetry, as you, doubtless, with your usual penetration have discovered, and which being interpreted, means :

“ ‘ Did ye hear of the Widow Malone?

Och hone.

She lives near the town of Athlone,

Alone.’ ”

Miss Dickett had listened to this speech, not very well

knowing whether her young master was in jest or earnest; and now taking advantage of the first pause, while Charley was reposing on his laurels, she gave vent to another burst of indignant feeling.

“Yes, it’s all very fine,” repeated the outraged female, “showin’ off yer larnin’ afore folks. Yer needn’t think, Mr. Charles, you’re the honly one in the world which is larned, for I ’ad a edification in my youth as good as hanybody, so I had, though I never larned no *chang whang bangs* like that, I larned what was a ’eap more usefuller, which is to keep things in their own place; and if you’d stay at ’ome and larn hit, too, hit would be more *profitabler* than goin’ to live among them Irish in Dublin, which is too vulgar to be looked at, so they are.”

“A very just observation, ma’am,” replied Charley, “and one which shows a great deal of good sense, but bad grammar, on your part, and—what’s that?” exclaimed the young gentleman, turning abruptly round, as the sound of a subdued laugh from the door-way broke upon his ear.

Kate retreated just in time to avoid meeting Miss Dickett, who came sailing majestically from the room, and who, seeing no one, went indignantly down to the kitchen, muttering as she went:

“Yes, hit’s all very fine, so it is.”

Kate remained in her hiding-place until the coast was clear, and, then coming out, she tripped lightly from the hall, the last sound she heard being Charley’s voice, singing:

“Arrah, whillalloo murder! oh! why did ye die?”

The rain was falling, not heavily, as it had done some hours before, but in a damp, dismal, chilling drizzle. A thick, dense fog, perfectly English in its character, made the gloom so intense that one could hardly see objects a yard off. In fact, a more unpleasant or disagreeable day for a ride could not be found.

The groom, who stood holding her horse, seemed to be precisely of this same opinion, for as Kate seated herself and gathered up the reins preparatory to starting, he remarked :

“Better not go to-day, Miss Kate, you’ll be soaking wet, and it won’t be good for the pony either.”

“My good fellow, be kind enough to mind your own affairs,” replied Kate, haughtily. And the man, crest-fallen at her remark, slunk away.

With a smart cut of her whip, the horse darted forward ; in a moment, the lofty turrets and majestic trees of Dirritole were out of sight. Her road lay partly through a dripping forest, known by the name of Danemore Forest, from its being on the property of the earl. The forest path was passed, and Kate entered a smooth, broad road, over which her horse went with a rapidity that promised speedily to bring her to her journey’s end.

In a short time the Pines—as the home of Alice Desmond was called—came in sight. The place had taken its name from the great number of those trees by which it was surrounded. A smooth, graveled path led up to the house—a large but handsome mansion, of modern appearance and

architecture. A servant advanced to take her horse ; and, as Kate sprang lightly from her seat, she was struck by the melancholy, dejected appearance of his countenance.

“ Why, my good Peter, what is the matter ? ” inquired Kate, with graceful condescension, addressing the old man, whom she well knew.

“ Ah ! Miss Kate ! sad news, sad news ! ” replied the old man, mournfully shaking his head.

“ What has happened ? ” exclaimed Kate, growing pale with sudden apprehension, “ nothing has befallen your young mistress, I trust ? ”

“ Alas ! that I cannot say no,” answered Peter, drawing his hand across his eyes. “ Miss Alice has gone, or been carried off, no one knows where.”

“ Good Heavens ! is it possible ? ” exclaimed Kate, horror-struck to find her apprehensions so soon verified. “ Who could have been capable of so atrocious a deed ? ”

“ That’s just what I have been puzzling myself to find out ever since I heard it,” replied the old man. “ I thought she hadn’t an enemy in the world ; for if ever there was an angel on earth, Miss Alice was one.”

“ And her father—poor old man ! how does he bear this terrible blow ? ” said Kate, compassionately.

“ I haven’t seen him since he heard it, which was only this morning,” answered Peter : “ but Bess L’Olise, who was up at the house, told me a while ago he was taking on dreadfully. He had a letter—a note she left on her dressing-table—which seemed to afflict him dreadfully. Bess said, her

step-sister, Janie, Miss Alice's own maid, had gone with her, too."

"A letter!" exclaimed Kate. "Perhaps that explains." And, turning from the old man, she bounded up the steps like a deer, in a manner very different from her usual dignified motions, and burst unceremoniously into the room where the old man sat.

He was lying back in a large arm-chair, moaning and wringing his hands in the last extremity of grief. He held a note tightly crumpled up in one hand, over which he at times broke forth in passionate lamentations. The snows of seventy winters had whitened his hoary locks, and the venerable features, generally placid and dignified, were now convulsed with sorrow. As his eyes fell upon Kate, he started to his feet as if to meet her; but his strength, exhausted by suffering, was unequal to the effort, and he fell heavily back in his seat.

"Too late, Kate Sidney, too late," he cried bitterly. "She is gone—gone forever, the light of my eyes, the star of my heart, my sole earthly comfort, my young, beautiful Alice! Oh, Alice, Alice!" And with that despairing cry, he covered his face with his hands, and swayed to and fro, in hopeless sorrow.

Kate advanced, knelt before him, and took his hand between both hers, while she said, in a voice which she vainly strove to render calm:

"My dear sir, be comforted. I feel convinced we will all see Alice well and happy once more. Do not, I beseech you, thus give way to your grief."

The old man seemed not to hear her. His eyes had a vacant, wondering look, as though he saw not the object around, but rather was gazing at something beyond the reach of their vision. As Kate ceased, he suddenly and passionately broke forth :

“What have I ever done that I am to be thus bereaved? What crime have I ever committed, that I am thus severely chastised? I have neither slain, nor stolen, nor coveted aught, and yet I am punished by losing all I love on earth, while the wicked triumph in their sins. How long, O Lord! how long? Thy hand lies heavily upon me, and upon my house, while the ungodly rejoice in their crime. They have stolen from me my own little ewe-lamb, and left me alone and desolate to go with sorrow to the grave. We have been surrounded by those who called themselves friends in the day of our prosperity; but when the hand of the Lord lay heavily upon us, all fled. They have borne my child, my only one from my home, and there was no arm raised to defend her; no true heart to echo back her cry for mercy. They have borne her away, and I shall never, never see her again! Oh, Alice, Alice!” He wrung his hands, and cried aloud in his deep sorrow.

“My dear sir”—Kate’s voice failed; and, covering her face with her hands, she wept also.

Her heartfelt grief touched the sorrow-stricken old man as nothing before had done. His eyes lost their wild, frenzied expression, and assumed a softer look, but no tears came to his relief, the blow had struck too hard to be eased by

weeping. He laid his hand on her bowed head, and said, kindly :

“Poor child ! you loved her, too ; but why should you weep ? You have many friends left who love you still, even as she loved you, but I have no one ; I am alone—all alone ; there is no one in the wide world to care for the stricken old man, since the daughter of his old age has been torn from his arms, leaving no word behind her to tell of the fate, with no farewell, save this.”

He crushed, as he spoke, the letter in his hand. Kate had forgotten it in her sorrow and compassion for him, but the action restored it to her mind. Perhaps it might throw some light on the mystery.

“Will you not let me see the letter ?” she asked, hesitatingly.

“Yes, yes, take it ; it is but right you should read her last farewell—the last farewell of one who loved you.”

Kate eagerly took the letter. Her eyes filled, as she glanced at the well-known handwriting. It had evidently been penned in a hasty and trembling hand, and ran as follows :

“MY OWN DEAR FATHER :—Ere you read this, I shall be away from home ; but grieve not. I hope soon to return. I cannot, I dare not, now explain why I am obliged to leave you for a time ; but, believe me, the separation is as painful to me as it can possibly be to you. I may not now explain further, but once again I beseech you to bear my absence with resignation. My faithful Janie accompanies me. Kate Sidney, whom I love, and who loves me, will, I trust, be a second daughter to you, until the return of your own little—
“ALICE,”

Kate read this letter with wonder and surprise. The mystery seemed to increase, and this letter, instead of dispelling it, only increased it the more. What *could* it have been that induced her so strangely to leave home? Kate knit her brows, and tried to think. But the more she thought, the more inexplicable the whole affair became. She glanced at the old man, who now lay back in a sort of stupor, his grief having exhausted itself by its violence. Seeing she could be of no use here, she resigned him to the care of an old servant, and then slowly and thoughtfully turned from the house.

With her eyes fixed in deep thought on the ground, and lost in her own reflections, she heard not a light tripping footstep behind her, until a clear, musical voice, with a peculiar foreign accent, close to her ear, called :

“ Miss Kate.”

Kate turned hastily round, and saw before her a bright, handsome girl, whose vivacious, sparkling black eyes, dark, rich complexion, full voluptuous figure, and coquettish air bespoke her a native of sunny France. It was Bess L’Olise, the step-sister of Janie, whom, as we will have frequent occasion to mention, we may as well make the reader acquainted with.

Janie’s father, who was steward at the Pines, had lost his wife when Janie was a mere child. About a year after this melancholy event, business called him to London, and while there he contracted a violent attachment for a handsome French milliner, a widow with one daughter, then residing with her mamma’s friends in *la belle France*. The steward

wanted a wife to mind his house, and look after Janie. Madame wanted a husband to support her and Mademoiselle Bess, and both, not knowing what better to do became united for better, for worse. Madame L'Olise, became a bride, sent for Bess, and took her with them to the Pines. A few years after, Alice Desmond, taking a fancy to pretty Janie, installed her as her own waiting-maid, and Bess became her father's pet. It needed but little coaxing to induce him to send her to France to be educated; and from her academy she had arrived about a year previous to the opening of our tale, as pretty and coquettish a little Parisian as could be met in a long day's travel.

On the present occasion, mademoiselle advanced with a profoundly mysterious air, and looking hastily around to see that there was no one listening, she said, eagerly:

"Mademoiselle has been up to the house."

Kate nodded briefly, inwardly wondering what the little French girl could want.

"Has Miss Kate any idea of the cause of Miss Alice's departure?" inquired Bess, in the same cautious tone.

"No; why?" said Kate, with some curiosity.

"Because I think I know something of the matter. I have not mentioned it to any one yet. I wanted to wait until I should see Lord Arndale, but there's no knowing when that may be. Therefore, ma'm'selle, I will tell you; it may lead to something."

Kate was silent, but the anxious look on her face told how eagerly she was listening.

“Last night,” began Bess, “I need not tell you, was awful stormy. Heavens! how frightened I was! Well, a little after dark, as I sat sewing, I heard the outer gate slamming back and forth at a great rate. Papa was up at the house with Sir Hugh, and there was no one to shut it but me, for mamma would not go out for the world in such a storm. So as the gate had to be shut, and there being no help for it, I threw on my cloak and went out. Just as I reached the gate, there came a dazzling blaze of lightning, and judge of my surprise at seeing a carriage standing before the gate. Frightened half to death, I drew back behind a low, stunted pine tree, where I was effectually concealed from view. Scarcely had I hidden myself, when, in a brief lull of the tempest, I fancied I heard footsteps coming down the gravelled walk right before me. At the same moment, there came another flash, and by the fitful, lurid light, I beheld Miss Alice and my step-sister, Janie. Both were muffled up in hoods and shawls, but I knew them immediately. Wondering what could be the matter, I strove to look through the darkness, but in vain. Ere the lightning again lit up for a single instance the pitchy blackness around, the carriage was gone. I hastened back, and told mamma, but she said that Miss Alice had probably received some hasty summons, that she was forced to obey in spite of the storm. So I thought no more about it until this morning, when I heard that Miss Alice and Janie had gone no one knew where. I felt at first inclined to tell Sir Hugh, but seeing him nearly beside himself, I concluded to wait until I should see Lord Arsdale.

which I would have done, had you not come. And now, Miss Sidney, this is all I know. Do you think it will throw any light upon this mysterious affair?"

Kate had listened with breathless interest to this recital with lips apart, and an air of intense suspense. As Bess concluded, she exclaimed, eagerly:

"Surely you know whose carriage it was, do you not?"

Mademoiselle L'Olise shook her head.

"How should I?" she replied. "I only caught a momentary glimpse of it by that sudden flash. No, I do not know whose it was."

"Well, this is at least some slight clew to her fate," said Kate, musingly. "It seems she went of her own accord. I fancied at first she had been violently abducted. Well, Bess, you had best keep this matter to yourself until we see more about it. Meantime, do all you can for Sir Hugh, as it is impossible for me to remain here any longer this morning; and if, by any means, you obtain any more information on this subject, communicate it to me the very first thing. Good morning, mademoiselle." And Kate slowly gathered up the ample folds of her riding-dress, mounted her horse, and at a more subdued and saddened pace than when she first started, she turned in the direction of Dirritole.

Bess L'Olise stood watching her, until she disappeared from sight, with a peculiar expression on her handsome face. At length she turned away, muttering to herself:

"Do I know whose carriage it was? *Ma foi!* that I do. What would Miss Kate say, I wonder, if I told her it was

her uncle's, the Earl of Danemore's. I should be treated as a vile calumniator, and the vengeance of the earl would fall upon us. No, no ; I shall keep that much of my knowledge to myself. Those English have for a proverb : ' A silent tongue maketh a wise head.' And I shall test its virtue. The earl has carried her off for fear Lord Arndale should marry her, I feel perfectly sure of it. But by what means he induced her to accompany him, I know not. Well, I shall not puzzle myself about it ; time will tell, and as Mr. Charley Sidney says : ' Least said is soonest mended.' "

With these words, Bess turned into the lodge, as the house occupied by the steward of the Pines was called, while Kate Sidney, in blissful ignorance of the amount of her knowledge, slowly pursued her way homeward.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LITTLE AMERICAN.

A dancing shape—an image gay,
To haunt, bewilder, and waylay.

It was early morning of that same drizzly, wet, foggy day—that same eventful morning which beheld Alice Desmond in her dreary shelter in the old Moor Manor, and which saw Kate learning her fate at the Pines—that a stage coach went rumbling and jolting over a rough, uneven road, now rising abruptly on a sudden jagged eminence, and again settling abruptly down in a manner anything but agreeable. On his seat sat the driver, muffled up to the eyes in a huge, shaggy great-coat, which bid defiance alike to the chill, cutting, morning air, and the driving rain. The tired horses plunged and trampled blindly onward over the miry ground, with a slow, weary gait.

Inside the coach sat four persons, three of whom were sound asleep. One of these, a man past the middle age, bearing about him unmistakably the air and manner of a sailor, was a stout, good-humored looking personage, whose vigorous snoring on the present occasion bore evidence to the profoundness of his slumbers. Opposite him sat a woman, whose pale, wasted features still bore the trace of

former beauty, now nearly obliterated by an anxious, fretful look, while her quick, troubled breathing, and the frequent knitting of her brows, bespoke that even in sleep the troubles of her waking hours were not forgotten. She was dressed in deep mourning, and her thin, pale features looked white and pale in contrast with her sable mourning-robes.

In the farthest corner of the coach, with her head thrown back, her bonnet bent into all sorts of shapes, and her whole appearance in the utmost disorder, lay an old, jet-black negress. A fat, shiny, ebony countenance was hers; and her nasal performance not only equaled, but even exceeded that of the gentleman—Captain Morton; of the good ship *Sea Shell*.

The fourth, last, but far from least occupant of the old-fashioned stage-coach, was a young girl apparently not more than sixteen years of age. She was pretty—decidedly pretty—with the wickedest, laughing hazel eyes in the world. The delicate purity of her complexion, white and stainless as that of an infant, was relieved by the faint pink tinge of the cheeks, and the deep red of the little, delicately formed mouth. In stature, she was scarcely middle size; but slight, graceful, and delicate as a fairy. The predominant expression of her features was overflowing with mischief and trickery; fun lurked maliciously in her bright, brown eyes, and basked in every smile and dimple of her rougish face.

She now sat by the window, gazing first out at the gloomy prospect around, and then at the three sleeping faces beside

her, with an expression of the most intense vexation and disgust. At length her thoughts found vent in words :

“ I declare, if this ain’t too bad ! ” muttered the young lady, turning her back with a jerk to the others ; “ and I do wish we’d never left home to come to this horrid, freezing, foggy, hateful place. I’m sure it’s done nothing but drizzle, drizzle, drizzle, and drop—as if the weather had a cold in its head, and needed a pocket-handkerchief. And then the fog, too, a body can’t see their nose before their face for it. I’d feel it a relief if there would come a real genuine rain storm ; but I don’t believe these hateful English could get up such a thing. My ! isn’t that a prospect out there ! ” here she glanced from the window with a look of infinite contempt—“ trees about a foot high, and without a leaf on them at that. Sky as black as a darkey’s face, and clouds piled in heaps, one on top of another, like buckwheat cakes in winter. And then to aggravate the matter, this jolting, tumbling, old ark of a coach, pitching us up in the air one minute—with as much indifference as if we weren’t free-born Americans, and tumbling us down with a jerk the next. Oh ! dear ! what it is to be afflicted ! ”

Here the little American heaved a sigh that might have been heard a mile off, and fell once more into a profound fit of musing. At length her feelings seemed to grow too powerful to be controlled, and she again began :

“ I’d like to know, anyway, what kind of folks there relations of mamma’s are. Stuck up, I suppose. But, then, uncle’s an earl, a real live earl—only think of *that* ! Well, I

don't care ; because a native-born American, such as I am, is just as good ; and if I don't astonish them by and by, it'll be a caution. Oh ! ya-w-w ! I'll split my jaws yawning, I'm afraid. I wish some of them would wake up. I'm tired to death talking to myself, and it don't seem to do me a bit of good. I'll wake mamma ; if she hasn't slept enough by this time, it's a wonder."

Suiting the action to the words, she approached and shook the lady soundly, exclaiming :

"Mamma, wake up, I tell you ! You don't expect a body can sit here all day without some one to talk to."

The sleeper turned round, opened her eyes, and muttered, drowsily : "Yes, don't mind her, she's always talking. Um-m-m !" And the speaker closed her eyes once more.

"Who's always talking ? I do believe she thinks she's talking to her relations, and telling them about me. Mamma, *will* you wake up ?"

"Um-m-m, she's wild—soon be settled—um-m-m-m," drawled the sleeper.

"Oh, dear me ! Well, I never ! *Will* you listen to that, now !" said the young lady appealing to some imaginary individual. "I'll leave it to everybody, if that ain't provoking. Well, I must get some one to talk to, or I'll die of the blues, that's certain ! Let's see—oh, I have it ! I'll get out with the coachman—that's the idea ; he'll do better than no one !"

So saying, she arose, threw a large shawl over her slender shoulders, and pulled the check-string. The coach stopped ; but ere the driver could ascertain what was the matter, to his

unbounded surprise he saw the little lady descend, slam the door after her, mount the box, and take her seat beside him ; and all with a rapidity that completely bewildered him. Ere he had recovered sufficiently from his surprise to start once more, the young lady said, with the utmost coolness :

“There ! you needn’t stand there gaping all day—that’s all I wanted. My ! for goodness sake, don’t sit staring as if you were afraid I’d eat you ! Drive on !”

“But—but—really, miss, this is not a proper place for you,” stammered the driver, looking absolutely dumfounded.

“Oh, fiddlestick ! Who cares whether it is proper or not ? Go ahead !”

Thus adjured, the coachman started once more—still, however, looking completely astonished.

“You see, Mr.—what’s your name ?” began the young lady.

“Smith, Miss.”

“Do tell ! It’s John Smith, ain’t it ?”

“Yes,” replied the man, beginning to think he had hold of a witch.

“Well, if that ain’t funny ! I think I have met about a dozen John Smiths every place I’ve ever been. Well, then, John—I’ll call you that for short—my name’s Maggie Nelson, that hateful folks used to call Crazy Mag. So now as we are acquainted, I beg to tell you that I came out here to talk to you, because they’re every one asleep in there. It’s not high treason, is it ?”

“Oh, no,” replied John Smith ; “but I’m afraid you’ll catch cold, sitting out here in the rain.”

"No, I won't; the wet won't melt me. And, speaking of that, does it *always* drizzle in this uncomfortable manner here?"

John laughed.

"No, not always, Miss Nelson. The sun shines sometimes."

"I want to know," ejaculated Maggie. "Well, it will be a novelty to me to see the sun again. It's been drizzling ever since we landed, and it looks now as if it were never going to do anything else. I wish there was any convenient way of transporting the whole island to America; we could easily set it down in one of our smallest lakes that wouldn't be fit for anything else. We'd try to civilize all you John Bulls a little, and with the aid of our American sun, there's no telling but something might be made of it yet—a cabbage-garden for the President, for instance. There, now, nobody need say I'am not a philanthropist after this—for if that ain't a real philanthropic scheme, I'd like to know what is!"

John opened his eyes, and stared at his companion in horrified wonder. His silence, however, produced no effect on Maggie; she had got some one to talk to, and that was all she wanted.

"And, speaking of transporting," she began, after a brief pause to take breath, "reminds me that I'am going to Dirritole. Do you know where that is?"

"To be sure I do! It's the country residence of the Earl of Danemore," replied John, looking indignant that any one should question such a thing.

“Well, mamma, and I, and Dido—that’s our servant—are going to live there. The earl’s my uncle, mamma’s brother.”

“What!” exclaimed John, dropping the reins in astonishment. “Is it possible that Miss Maria has come home! Surely she’s not *your* mother?”

“Yes, she is. Mamma’s name is Maria, and we are all going, as I told you, to live at Dirritole. And now I *would* like to know how *you* know anything about us. Did your family know mamma?”

“Yes, miss, I certainly did,” answered the man, still looking as though unwilling to believe what he heard. “I was once, when a young man, coachman in the earl’s family, Miss Maria—his sister—married an American, and left England with him. Is it really possible she is coming back?”

“Why, of course she is. You don’t think I would tell a fib, do you?” replied Maggie indignantly. “And since you know so much about them, tell me, are there any young folks there? Mamma does not know, ’cause uncle never told her in his letters.”

“Yes, Lady Danemore herself is young; but I hardly think she will be much of a companion for *you*; she is very still. Then there is Miss Kate Sidney and her brother, Mr. Charley, I think you’ll like him, he’s a dreadful wild young gentleman.”

“Humph! I suppose you mean by that *I’m* wild, too. But if you do, I can tell you you’re mistaken, because I’m not. I’m a real nice, quiet, settled young lady—as they’ll

soon find out at Dirritole. But you haven't told me all. There is another, isn't there, my cousin, the earl's son?"

"Oh, yes; Lord Arndale; they say he is going to be married to Miss Alice Desmond."

"Is he, really? I hope they'll invite me to the wedding. Is he handsome?"

"Yes, miss, very handsome, indeed!"

"I'm glad of that. I hate ugly men. Is he funny?" pursued Maggie.

"Well, I can't exactly say," replied John, laughing, "he's pleasant and agreeable, I think, when let alone; but it don't do to rouse his temper. I remember seeing him in a pretty high passion once."

"How was it? How did it happen? Do tell me all about it?" said Maggie eagerly.

"Well," began John, "it was about a year ago. Business had called me to London, and as I was passing through an obscure street late one night, I saw a young girl endeavoring to escape from two gentlemen who were following her. I knew by her appearance she was a stranger in the city; and it seems, as I afterward discovered, that having lost her way, and wandered about for a long time, she had asked one of these young men to direct her. This they readily consented to do; but she soon found out they were not leading her the right way, and feeling alarmed at their conversation and manner, she endeavored to escape from them.

"To prevent this, one of them rudely seized her by the arm. She screamed aloud for help, and her appeal was an-

swered by a gentleman who had chanced to overhear her. He approached, and sternly bade the young man let her go; in answer to which, the young gentleman politely told him to 'mind his business.' Lord Arndale, without waiting for another word, sprang upon him like a tiger, and with one blow of his fist felled him to the ground. His companion, endeavoring to assist his friend, met with the same fate, and measured his length in the mud. The first recovering in a moment from the effects of the blow, rose to his feet, and, half-blinded by mud and passion, flew like a savage at Lord Arndale, who coolly met his attack, and again and again knocked him down. His friend—thinking prudence the better part of valor—after the first blow, beat a precipitate retreat. So the fellow, seeing he was no match for Arndale, and that his friend had deserted him, scrambled off, muttering dire threats of vengeance as he went. As soon as he was gone, the young nobleman turned to the girl—who, all this time, had stood like one stupefied with terror—and offered to conduct her home. She gratefully accepted his offer; and having named the place in which she resided, he conducted her safely to it, and then sought his own lodgings.

"The next morning, he received a polite note from the young gentleman—whose name was Sir George Villars, a well-known sporting character—saying, that after what had passed, he must expect the satisfaction that one gentleman owes to another."

"The horrid wretch," interrupted Maggie, with flashing

eyes, "that means to fight a duel. Surely Lord Arndale didn't meet him?"

"Certainly he did," said John; "as a man of honor, he couldn't refuse. They met at the place appointed. Sir George's ball passed through Lord Arndale's hat; while his, with surer aim, lodged in the fleshy part of the baronet's arm, without, however, doing him any material injury. It was a lesson to him to mind *his* own business in the future, and let other people alone; though whether he has improved by it, is more than I can tell."

"How nobly Lord Arndale behaved!" exclaimed Maggie, with glowing cheeks, "and I *do* love him, 'pon my word I do!"

"What would Miss Desmond say to that?" said John, with a sly laugh.

"Indeed, I don't care what she would think," replied Maggie decidedly; "he's my cousin, and as he is handsome, and no coward, I've got a right to love him just as much as ever I like. And now tell me something about this other cousin of mine, this Charley Sidney. Is he handsome too?" Mr. John Smith laughed.

"Yes, he's handsome enough," he replied; "but as for telling you about him, that's utterly out of the question.

Bless you, miss! that young gentleman is as full of tricks as a monkey, and as slippery as an eel. He's continually getting into scrapes, and continually getting out of them. The earl sent him to Eton, to be trained in the way he should go; but he broke wild, and got into disgrace so often, that

they sent him home. His uncle, in a fit of desperation, sent him off to Trinity College, Dublin, and what mischief he done there, Heaven only knows. He's at home now, spending his vacation, and driving the rest of the household out of their wits. In fact, Master Charley is looked upon, at home, as people look upon poverty—as a necessary evil—sent as a scourge to the world for their sins. I rather think you'll be an immense favorite with him, and it's quite probable he'll patronize you."

Before the little American could reply, a head was thrust out of the window, and a sharp voice called :

"Maggie! Maggie! Oh, you dreadful child! What *would* your uncle say to such conduct. Get down off that box, and come right in here, this minute!"

"Yes; that's Miss Maria; I *ought* to know that voice!" muttered John to himself.

"Why, mamma," remonstrated Maggie, "you needn't be cross. This gentleman knows you!"

"What gentleman?" said Mrs. Nelson, sharply.

"Why, this one out here beside me, the driver, his name is John Smith, he used to know you long ago, he says."

"Perhaps you forget me, Miss Maria," said John, humbly. "I used to be your father's groom."

"Oh! yes—I remember you—how do you do, John?—Maggie, come inside instantly. Be so good, sir, as to stop the coach while my daughter gets down," replied the lady, in no very amiable tone of voice.

John accordingly drew up, while Maggie got off the box, muttering :

“Mamma’s mighty particular. I suppose she’ll say she wasn’t asleep, when I get in. It’s the way she always does.”

“Well, Miss Nelson,” said her mother, severely, as she took her former seat—“very pretty conduct this, isn’t it? I wonder you are not ashamed of treating a stage-driver as an equal. What would your uncle say?”

“Oh, I’m not afraid; he may say what he likes,” replied Miss Nelson. “And as to the driver, I’m sure it was better to sit talking to him than sit here, thinking how dreadful ugly you all looked asleep.”

“What!” exclaimed Mrs. Nelson, drawing herself up indignantly. “Do you mean to say *I* was asleep? I was wide-awake the whole time!”

“My stars and garters!” ejaculated the horrified Maggie. “After *that*! Oh, I just knew you’d say that. I was sure of it!”

“And do you still persist, undutiful child, in saying I was asleep?” said Mrs. Nelson, in rising anger.

“Why, to be sure I do, mamma. Didn’t I see you asleep. and your mouth wide open,” persisted the incorrigible Maggie. “If you were awake, why didn’t you prevent me from getting out, then?”

This was a question Mrs. Nelson did not feel herself called upon to answer. So she drew herself up stiffly, and bidding Miss Maggie rather coarsely, to “hold her tongue,” she leaned back, and was soon absorbed in wondering whether

her brother wouldn't grant her a handsome private settlement—in which case, she determined Maggie should become the reigning belle; and just as she beheld (in fancy) a duke proposing, on bended knees, for the honor of her daughter's hand, she dropped to sleep once more, leaving the duke to wait for his answer till another occasion.

The day wore wearily on to Maggie, who sat fidgeting from side to side, wishing the carriage would upset, or some other accident occur to disturb the monotony of the journey, and the slumbers of her companions.

At length, a little past noon, to her inexpressible relief, the carriage drew up before the Danemore Arms, and the driver announced that their journey was at an end. This at last effectually banished sleep from the eyes of the whole party.

The captain shook hands with Mrs. Nelson and Maggie, and announced his intention of going back immediately.

"You had better accompany us to Dirrotole, my dear captain," said Mrs. Nelson, "that my brother may thank you for your kindness."

"Pooh, pooh! nonsense!" said the gruff old sailor, "what's the good of his thanks? I don't want them. Good-bye; I hope you'll both be happy in England."

"I sha'n't for one," said Maggie; "because of all the horrid, foggy, hateful, drizzly places that ever was, this is the worst. You may look out for me at home; for the very first chance I get, I'm going to run away and go back—so there!"

“Maggie!” said her mother, reprovingly.

“I don’t care, mamma; it’s just true,” continued the young lady; “and I’ve a good mind to go back with the captain now, for I’m tired and sick to death of it already.”

“Well, Maggie, whenever you come back to New Orleans, you’ll be welcome,” said the captain, laughing; and with a last good-bye, he rode off.

The landlord of the “Danemore Arms,” at Mrs. Nelson’s request, dispatched a messenger to announce their arrival at Dirritole. In half an hour the elegant family carriage appeared at the inn, and the earl alighted to welcome his sister and niece.

The earl was rather favorably impressed with the hoiden—as he had designated Maggie—as that talkative young lady went through the ceremony of introduction, in compliance with her mother’s request, in the most decorous manner.

When the carriage arrived at Dirritole, Maggie opened her eyes, and gazed around with a look of marked contempt and disdain.

“What a horrid, gloomy, hateful old tumble-down place!” she muttered, *sotto voce*. “My! what a lot of rats there must be in it!”

The earl ushered them into the drawing-room, where the countess, Kate, and Charley sat. All arose at their entrance; and my lady’s eyes were momentarily raised to regard the young American. Maggie held her breath as she gazed—never in her life before had she seen any one so beautiful.

As the earl took her hand and led her forward, Maggie felt

a strange feeling of shyness such as she seldom experienced. But when her hands were clasped in those, so small and delicate—when she felt those beautiful lips pressed to her cheek, and heard that sweet, low, musical voice bidding her welcome, her heart fluttered with a strange and hitherto unknown sensation of joy and pain mingled. She looked and felt so quiet and subdued, that any one who had previously known her would have been astonished at the change.

Kate's welcome was grave but kind, and Maggie scarcely knew whether to make up her mind to like or dislike her. But in Charley she saw a kindred spirit, and with him at once she made up friends.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS MAGGIE'S SENTIMENTS.

“ Hurrah ! hurrah ! for laughing love,
A fig for those who sigh,
Hurrah ! hurrah ! for the bounding heart,
And the bright and sparkling eye !
The smile that parts the rosy lips,
And the look of artless glee
That speaks of the warm and cheerful heart.
Oh ! that's the heart for me !”—*Anon.*

“ How do you like England, Cousin Maggie ?” inquired Charley, about an hour after her arrival, as they both sat by themselves at the window.

“ Oh, not at all ! I think it a detestable place !” replied Maggie, disdainfully. “ I'm sure you must think so yourself ; did you ever see such fogs ?”

“ Why, that's nothing !” replied Charley, “ I consider it very fine to-day ; in fact it's seldom we have such fine weather. It's only once in a year we have so little fog !”

Maggie opened her eyes, and stared at him in unbounded astonishment ; but Charley's countenance was as grave as that of a judge.

“ Well, any way,” she said, after a pause, “ I hate it, and every thing in it, from that dismal, dreary London down to this musty, rat-eaten old *Dirtyhole*, as Dido calls it.”

“A very appropriate name!” remarked Charley, stretching himself leisurely. “Hand me that foot-stool, Maggie, like a good child!”

“I won’t!” said Maggie; “you’re horrid lazy, Mr. Charley, let me tell you that; and I don’t think it is right to encourage you in it. Get up now, and show me all through this queer old house!”

With a look of despair, Charley arose, stifling a yawn as he did so, and offering his arm to his cousin, led her from the room.

“What shall I show you first?” he inquired. “Are you fond of pictures?”

“Not very; but if you have any to show me, I’ll look at them!”

“Will you, really?” muttered Charley; “a great stretch of condescension that, on your part, Miss Yankee!”

“What on earth are you muttering there!” said Maggie, impatiently; “can’t you speak out loud, so a body can hear you, and not be mumbling to yourself in that impertinent manner.”

“I beg your pardon, Miss Nelson!” said Charley, in contrite tone, “I was merely remarking what a discreet and penetrating young lady you were. I didn’t say it aloud, for fear you would be offended. Are all the Yankees as sagacious as you are?”

“Sagacious! I guess so!” replied Maggie; “and the best proof they ever gave of it, was in driving all the redcoats out of America. And I guess they won’t come back in a hurry!”

“Ah, there’s considerable Bunker Hill about you?” said Charley. “But here we are in the picture-gallery. Look at your ancestors, Maggie—that noble train of gallant lords, and knights, and earls. Are you not proud to be descended from so illustrious a line?”

“What a funny-looking old set they are!” said Maggie, thoughtfully, without paying any attention to Charley’s affected enthusiasm. “Who is that in the white night-gown and night-cap?”

“Why, Maggie!” remonstrated her cousin, “that’s Raymond Danemore, once an illustrious bishop; and he is there represented in his pontifical robes!”

“You don’t say!” ejaculated Maggie. “And who’s that savage-looking cut-throat, with the sword sticking out from his side, like a toasting-fork, and the big mustache, looking like two rats’ tails?”

“Pon my word, Miss Nelson, your remarks are absolutely shocking. That most renowned warrior is, or was, the Earl of Danemore, the father of the present earl—our grand uncle—Maggie!”

“What a horrid old fright he is!” said Maggie. “And there’s, who’s—oh! I know who that grim, sulky-looking gentleman is. It’s our uncle, the present earl—ain’t it?”

Charley answered in the affirmative.

“And that’s lady Danemore!” said Maggie, turning to the next. “Tell me about her, Charley. What makes her look so pale and sorrowful?”

“Rather a difficult question to answer, *ma belle cousine!*”

answered Charley ; “ she’s been so, ever since I knew her !”

“ And how long’s that ?”

“ Oh, a good many years. I suppose you know the late Lady Danemore has been dead a long time ?”

“ Yes, I know it ; mamma told me so,” replied Maggie.

“ Well,” said Charley, “ it seems the present countess is by birth a French lady : her name was Madeline Rochfort. Being left an orphan at a very early age, an old English lady took a fancy to her, and adopted her. At the house of this old lady the earl first saw her ; and, being deeply enamored of her extraordinary beauty, at once begged her to become Lady Danemore. How such a handsome lady could fall in love with an old man like that, is, I must confess, past my penetration ; but, as there is no accounting for tastes, I suppose she did love him, else she would not have married him. Some ill-natured people say she took him for his wealth and rank, but whether she did or not is more than I know. At any rate she became Lady of Dirritole, whatever were her reasons. At that time she was just as pale, and as silent, and sad, as now, and will be, I think, while she lives.”

“ Some secret sorrow, perhaps !” suggested Maggie.

“ So romantic, folks say !” replied Charley ; “ but, for my part, I think it is the nature of the bea—I mean her natural manner. Some people, you know, are by nature taciturn and quiet—my cousin Maggie, for instance.”

“ Oh, what handsome boys !” exclaimed Maggie, suddenly

turning to two portraits hanging side by side. "Who are they?"

The picture represented two youths, very dissimilar in appearance. He who appeared to be the elder wore a bright, pleasant, cheery countenance. Off his broad white forehead the curling golden locks appeared to be blown by the breeze. His full, blue eye had a frank, open, laughing, look, that involuntarily made the heart warm toward him, but the thin lips wore a firm, decided, resolute expression, that somehow reminded Maggie of the earl. He stood with one hand encircling the neck of a shaggy mastiff, and with the other protected a fluttering, wounded bird from a red-eyed hawk that hovered above his head.

The other was a dark-eyed, dark-haired, haughty-looking boy, whose proud, handsome face wore so strong a resemblance to the earl that Maggie conjectured him to be his son. He looked, as he stood there, so haughtily erect, the very embodiment of pride and scorn.

"Oh, *how* handsome!" repeated Maggie, enthusiastically. "Oh, Cousin Charley, who are they?"

"Why, the younger of the two, the dark-looking one, is your Cousin Harry, Lord Arndale. Doesn't he look awfully proud?"

"And the other, who is he? Oh, I *do* love him!" exclaimed Maggie, fervently.

Charley laughed.

"Upon my honor, Miss Nelson, that's a very frank avowal; but I'm afraid it's little use for you to love him. Poor Walter!" he added, with a heavy sigh.

"Oh, Charley! how can you be so provoking? Don't you see I'm dying to hear something about him? Do tell me!"

"Well, he was the Earl of Danemore's eldest son, the rightful Lord of Arndale, the noblest-hearted fellow that ever drew the breath of life."

"And where is he now?" inquired Maggie, eagerly.

"Dead, Maggie!" said Charley, a shade passing over his bright, handsome young face.

"Oh, Cousin Charley!" said Maggie, inexpressibly shocked.

"Yes, Maggie!" repeated Charley, sternly; "they drove him from home—drove him to his grave; he was drowned!"

"How dreadful!" said Maggie, growing very pale. "How did it happen? Tell me cousin!"

Charley paused for a moment, and gazed thoughtfully at the picture; then he turned to Maggie, and began in a tone much more rapid and stern than his usual one of careless drollery:

"He was, as you are aware, perhaps, some three years older than his brother, and as different from him in disposition and manner as in looks. Walter was mild, buoyant, frank, free, and as open as the day, treating every one he met, whether rich or poor, in the same happy, careless manner. Harry, on the contrary, was very proud, even from childhood—like his father, in every respect, while Walter resembled his mother. Still, though Harry was naturally cold and reserved, he really loved his brother, and his cool prudence often extricated Walter from many a scrape, into which his rash, hot-headed conduct drew him, and he, many a time,

shielded him from his father's anger. Walter's favorite pastime was the chase. Every day saw him out with his gun, and by constant practice, he soon became an excellent marksman. Still he was exceedingly careless, and often, by his recklessness, did much unintentional mischief. The earl had at that time a dog, of whom he was very fond—the animal having on more than one occasion saved his life. One day, as Walter was out, as usual, in the forest, he saw, what in the distance he supposed to be a deer, fired, and shot the animal dead. Judge of his horror and consternation, when, upon coming up, he discovered it to be his father's dog. He knew how attached the earl was to the unfortunate animal, and how terrible would be his wrath, when he discovered its loss. Still Walter never for a moment thought of telling a falsehood, to conceal what he had done. He went to his father, and frankly avowed the deed—expressing, at the time, his sincere sorrow for the accident.

“The earl's rage was frightful at the news. Never being accustomed to subdue his passions, they had always found full sway. He stamped, raved, and swore like a madman, in fact, had he lost all he owned in the world, he could not have been in a fiercer passion.

“Walter listened in silence to his cutting reproaches. I can see him now, as he stood then, his lips so bitterly compressed, his eyes flashing with subdued anger. At last, in his blind fury, the earl struck him and bade him leave the house. I shall never forget the fierce look of his face as he turned and fled from his home forever.

“In his anger, the earl scarcely knew what he had said or done ; but as soon as the first paroxysm of rage was past he began to regret his brutal frenzy. He would have given worlds to have recalled his words, but it was now too late. Still, he lived in the hope his son would return ; but in vain. About a week after that fatal day, word was brought him that the body of a youth, answering the description of his son, had been washed ashore some miles distant.

“Almost maddened by the news, he hurried to the place, but found that the body had been interred. The clothes of the unfortunate boy were shown him, and he immediately recognized them as those of his son.

“From that day he grew morose and gloomy, and has never since permitted his son’s name to be spoken in his presence. All his hopes are now centered in Harry, who, at his brother’s death, became Lord Arndale—he is the last descendant of a long line of noble ancestors—and the earl is resolved that the name shall not die with him.”

“The wicked old wretch !” exclaimed Maggie, her cheeks glowing, and her eyes sparkling with indignation, “I just wish I had a chance to tell him a piece of my mind. Oh ! I’m real sorry he is any relation to me—the tyrannical, domineering, ugly tempered old curmudgeon !”

“The Lord preserve *me* from your wrath !” exclaimed Charley, piously ; “you’ve got a spunky tongue, my sweet cousin.”

“How *can* you speak in that unfeeling tone, Charley Sidney ?” said Maggie, impatiently ; “it is well he is not in our glorious land of freedom, or he would not get off after mur-

dering his own son, so easily. His wealth and rank would not shield him there !”

“My dear cousin, you state the case too strongly. He did not murder his son,” said Charley.

“Well, it was all the same,” retorted his cousin ; “his shocking temper was the cause. There, you needn’t say another word in his defense ; I can’t bear to think of it. Let us change the subject. Where is Lord Arndale now?”

“In London, I believe,” replied the young gentleman, stretching himself languidly on a lounge.

“What is he doing there?”

“Heaven only knows,” was the pious answer. “Courting some yellow skinned heiress, may be, or shooting somebody for looking crossways at him. He’s a desperate fellow, that Arndale.”

“I thought he was going to be married to some Miss Alice Desmond !” said Maggie.

“Whew !” whistled Charley. “You heard that, did you? Who told you?”

“Why, the stage-coach driver,” replied Maggie. “He used to live in the family, and knows all about it.”

“Oh, I know the fellow you mean—his name is John Smith ; and he told you that, did he?”

“Yes, and a great deal more,” said Maggie. “Isn’t it true?”

“Well really, I can’t say,” replied Charley. “I believe Arndale *has* a fancy that way ; but whether the earl will allow him to marry her or not, is another thing.”

“Why, you don’t mean to say he’d be ugly enough to prevent him if he wanted to?” said Maggie, opening her eyes.

“My dear cousin,” said Charley, “what an innocent little natural you are, I should think, after the specimen I have given you of my uncle’s pleasant temper, you wouldn’t be surprised at anything he would do.”

“Well, what are his objections to the match?” inquired Maggie. “Is the lady not rich?”

“Not very,” was the reply; “but *that’s* not the reason.”

“Then what is it?” persisted the questioner.

“I don’t know what it is myself very well,” answered Mr. Sidney; “but Kate, who is pretty well versed in these family matters, says his refusal originated in some quarrel Sir Hugh Desmond and the earl had formerly. I think, before Lady Desmond married Sir Hugh, the earl had proposed and been rejected. As he is not of a very forgiving temper, this affront has rankled in his mind ever since, and has caused his dislike to the Desmonds. I think he will change greatly before he allows Arndale to marry Miss Desmond.”

“The contrary old crab; I’d marry her in spite of him, if I were Lord Arndale.”

“I’ve no doubt of it,” said Charley drily; “but your worthy cousin has mighty high notions of duty, and would never do it. Besides, the earl has other objections. Sir Hugh is, comparatively speaking, poor, and his daughter would never do for the son of Lord Danemore. Indeed, on the whole, I rather think Lord Arndale and Miss Desmond will never be married,”

Maggie turned and gazed earnestly at the portraits of the two boys. Charley Sidney watched her for a moment, with a half smile on his face, and then, starting from his seat, he said :

“ Come, Maggie, they’ll wonder in the parlor where we’ve gone to. Let us go down.”

And tucking his cousin under his arm, they quitted the picture-gallery.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SECOND NIGHT IN THE OLD MOOR MANOR.

“Oh, tell me, father, can the dead
Walk on the earth, and look on us,
And lay upon the living’s head
Their blessings or their curse?”—*Whittier.*

The long, weary day had passed, and night, dark, dreary, chilly, and starless, settled down once more over the old Moor Manor. The dark, gloomy clouds that had hung over the sky all day seemed to grow blacker and more threatening as the night drew on. The cold, moaning wind came sweeping across the desolate moor, and blew raw and damp through many a crevice in the old mansion. Dreary and desolate was the scene without, and almost equally desolate was the scene within.

The bright fire that glowed so pleasantly in the huge fireplace was the only cheering sight in the vast empty room.

Seated in the chimney-corner, enveloped carefully in a large cloak, was Alice Desmond. The red firelight shone on her pale face, showing the lonely, dreary look it wore. The long, fair hair streamed uncared for down her shoulders. One small, snowy hand supported her head, while she gazed sadly and steadfastly into the fire. Sighs, long and deep, at

times came from her pale lips, but her eyes had a hard, dry, tearless look.

By her side sat Janie, looking pretty and neat as usual, but rather paler than was her wont, while a nervous, startled, restless look was on her face. At every sound she would start and grow paler, for the terror of the previous night had quite unstrung her nerves. Sometimes her eyes would wander to the face of her young mistress with a look of deep pity, that showed how sincerely her sorrows were felt.

John sat opposite, busy replenishing the fire—conversing at times, in a low whisper, to Janie, but even the sound of their own voices startled them, and they quickly relapsed into silence. The shadows came flitting hither and thither through the dreary old room—not even the bright blaze of the fire in the high chimney could banish the deepening gloom. The wind had that peculiar wailing sound which it ever has when it enters old buildings, shaking the rafters, and flapping some broken shutter at intervals, with a noise that made both turn pale.

But on Miss Desmond those dreary noises seemed to produce no effect. She was thinking of her father, all alone in his bereavement, of Lord Arndale, so brave, so noble-hearted, yet unable to aid her now.

She wondered to what cause her absence might be assigned ; then, as fancy conjured some injurious report that her mysterious absence might give rise to, and thought of the grief and trouble of those she loved, she bowed her face on her hands, and sobbed aloud.

In a moment Janie was by her side, her arms round the young lady's neck, while she said, huskily :

“ My dear, dear young lady, do not grieve. You will yet be out of the power of the wicked earl. John and I have decided on a plan for your escape.”

Miss Desmond's pale face grew a shade paler, as she exclaimed, hurriedly :

“ No, no, no ! You must not think of such a thing. I would not escape if I could. Promise me you will not think of such a thing.”

A very significant “ ahem,” from John, at this moment, warned Janie not to promise any such thing.

“ But, dear Miss Alice,” said Janie, “ how can we stop in this horrid, haunted place ? We will freeze with the cold, if we stop in it much longer. I am sure it is not fit for rats or ghosts to live in.”

“ You will not be obliged to stay in it much longer, my dear girl ; the earl is to take us to Stanton to-morrow. It makes little difference to me, however, where we stay,” added the lady with a sigh.

“ But oh ! my dear lady, this dreadful place is haunted ! We saw the most frightful ghost, last night, that ever appeared. Holy saints preserve us !”

And with a convulsive shudder Janie covered her face with her hands, and lowered her voice to a horse whisper.

Had her own thoughts not been so sad, Miss Desmond would have smiled at the superstitious fears of the girl ; now, however, she said, gravely :

“My good Janie, it is wrong to give way to those superstitious fears. It is only a silly fancy that the dead can revisit the earth. I thought you had too much sense to give way to the foolish fancies of an over-excited brain, and mistake a phantom of feverish fear from reality.”

“That’s what the earl said!” remarked John, rather sulkily; “but he seen it himself for all, and got as white as a sheet. I don’t know how we could all see it, if it was a fancy of Janie’s. For my own part I could take my gospel oath I seen it as plain as I do you now. Miss Alice, with a face like a skeleton, and the flames of fire coming out of his mouth!”

John’s voice involuntarily sank as he went on, and Janie shuddered convulsively as memory recalled the apparition. Even while he spoke, a low, hollow groan from overhead sounded distinctly through the gloomy room, and, with a simultaneous cry, John and Janie sprang to their feet, white as ashes. Miss Desmond alone kept her seat, though she, too, started and grew a shade paler.

“Oh, Miss Alice! Miss Alice! did you hear that?” exclaimed John, while Janie stood pallid with fear, unable to speak. “What do you say *now*?”

“I know not,” replied Alice, in a voice that trembled slightly, in spite of herself; “but still I cannot believe it to be a spirit. It must have been the rats or the wind—the wind often makes very singular noises.”

“It never made that; listen—there it is again!” exclaimed John, his teeth chattering with terror, as a low, agonized

groan came distinctly to their ears. "Oh, Miss Alice, the curse of God is on this house!"

"Heaven help us!" exclaimed the young girl, with a shudder. "I would the earl were here!"

As if in answer to her wish, a loud knock came to the door. Again and again it was repeated, before John could rise from his seat, with a violence that made the old mansion shake.

"There is the earl, now!" exclaimed Alice, eagerly; "hasten, John, and open the door!"

John needed no second bidding. Springing to his feet, he started from the room, and in another moment, Alice heard the bolt drawn back. But instead of the earl's voice, with a cry of terror, John fled back into the room, closely followed by a most singular-looking personage.

It was an old woman, apparently almost sixty years of age. Her dress consisted of a gown of coarse, grey woolen stuff, with a cloak of the same material. A rich handkerchief of crimson silk, striped with black, covered her head, and was knotted under her chin. Her face was singularly repulsive—the skin being wrinkled, yellow, and withered, and so thin that the cheeks seemed shrunk into dry skin. Her nose, large and prominent, increased her meagre look, while her mouth was sunken in until her nose and chin seemed nearly to meet. Her eyes, small, black, and fiery, were as bright and sharp as needles, and had an expression so wild, piercing and fierce, that the stoutest heart might well quail before them. She leaned upon a stout oaken stick—but her

erect figure seemed to denote that she carried it more from habit than necessity.

This singular old crone had two companions. One was a child not more than ten years of age. She was dressed in the same manner as the old woman, with a grey woollen mantle and dress, a bright silk handkerchief tied on her head. But in every other respect a more complete contrast could not be found. The dark, oval face was perfectly beautiful—the features, small and exquisitely formed—the large, dark Syrian eyes, bright and clear as stars. Yet over that fair young face hung, like a veil, an expression of the most profound sorrow. She now stood quietly by the old woman's side, her large, starry eyes gazing wonderingly around.

The other was a huge, fierce, blood-thirsty-looking dog, which, as he entered, sprang forward with a hoarse growl.

"Down, Death! be still, sir!" called the old woman, sharply, and the obedient animal crouched quietly at her feet.

The voice of the new-comer was in keeping with her looks—being harsh and croaking, with a strange, foreign sound. She stood in silence, watching the affrighted group, with an evil sneer, on her brown, shrunken face. All present knew her well—it was Mother Wail, the Witch of the Moor.

"Well," she began, fixing her sinister, black eyes on the shrinking form of Alice, "this is a dainty abode for a lady! It is long since the old haunted Moor Manor has had so fair an occupant!"

There was no reply. Alice's eyes were fixed, as if fascin-

ated, on the dark face of the hag, while John and Janie crouched back with fear.

“And you have been forced from home—forced from your father—brought hither by the Earl of Danemore against your will! Answer me, is it not so?” cried the old woman, still gazing piercingly on Alice.

“I hardly think I am obliged to answer you,” said Alice, recovering her composure. “You will greatly oblige us by leaving the room.”

“So you will not answer?” said the crone, with a sneer; “as well as if it mattered. Why girl, I know as much about the matter as yourself. But *his* day of reckoning is yet to come. There is a cloud hanging over his house which will soon burst—a shadow above his head which will darken all his life, disgrace and ill, and shameful death to those he loves best—and the doom brought on by his own hand shall soon fall. The viper that for years he has cherished will be the first to sting him. Yes, the day of reckoning is at hand; and when it comes then shall be my triumph. Hist! I hear his horse’s hoofs on the moor. Our time for meeting has not yet come, though it is at hand. Come, Magdalen—come Death!”

She drew her cloak closely around her, and turned from the manor quickly, followed by the child and the huge dog.

Scarcely had she disappeared, when the sound of horse’s hoofs rapidly approaching, gave warning that the earl was near at hand. In a moment more the earl’s voice was heard calling to John to come and take charge of his

horse. John went out, and the earl soon made his appearance splashed with mud, showing the haste with which he had ridden.

“Good-evening, Miss Desmond,” he said, upon entering, “I trust I see you quite recovered from your fatigue?”

“Thank you, my lord, I am nearly so,” said Alice, coldly.

“You had a visitor here to-night, if I mistake not?” said the earl, in a somewhat anxious tone.

“Yes—an old woman—known, I believe, as the Witch of the Moor.”

“I thought I left positive orders with that blockhead, John, to admit no one until my return?” said the earl angrily.

“It was not my fault, my lord,” said Alice. “She came to the door and knocked, and he, fancying it was your lordship, admitted her.”

“What did she want?” demanded the earl, suspiciously.

“I really don’t know,” replied Alice; “she was passing, probably on her way home, and, seeing the light, made bold to enter. A light in this old house is rather an unusual sight, I believe.”

“Who accompanied her?”

“A little girl whom she called Magdalen, and a dog named Death.”

“What did she say?” pursued the earl, determined to sift the matter thoroughly.

“Excuse me, my lord, I really cannot repeat her words: it was mere idle raving though, I believe.”

The earl gazed steadily into her face for a moment ; then turning abruptly, he strode to the window, and stood as if endeavoring to pierce with his eyes the thick darkness, The storm, meanwhile, was each moment increasing.

“ We will hardly be able to start for Stanton to-morrow, my lord,” said Alice, after a pause.

“ Hardly, I think,” replied the earl, dryly.

“ When are we to go, then?” inquired Alice.

The earl made no reply for a moment ; then coming over to where she sat, he said, coolly :

“ Miss Desmond, I have been thinking the matter seriously over, and I have come to the conclusion that it is better for you not to be removed at all. Your absence has, as you may imagine, created many surmises and rumors ; and knowing the feelings that have for so long a time existed between our families there are many ready even now to link our name together in this affair. Were I to convey you to Stanton, as I at first proposed, my absence at the same time with you would give ground to this report ; an investigation would probably follow, and the whole matter be thus brought to light. This, I am sure, you are as anxious to avoid as I am myself ; and the only way to do so is by remaining quietly here—at least for the present. I shall have everything you want conveyed to you ; and with those two servants you will be able to pass the time, I trust. As for that intrusive old woman, I shall take measures to keep her tongue still on the subject, and care must be taken to prevent a similiar visit for the future. I shall have the windows boarded up in such a

manner that the light of the fire will no longer be a guide to tell it is inhabited. I myself shall frequently visit you, and see that everything necessary for your comfort is provided."

"And we must stay in this awful place, that is filled with horrible ghosts!" exclaimed Janie. "Oh, indeed, I will not for one! I would sooner die than stay here!"

"Perhaps you will be obliged to choose between the two, fool!" said the earl, fiercely. "Stay you must, and shall! My reputation is not to be risked for the silly fears of a puling girl. Everything you want shall be brought to you, and you will have nothing to do but to remain here quietly for a few weeks. The sights you fancy you see here are nothing but foolish vagaries of an over-excited imagination. You have heard so many idle stories of this old house being haunted, that you have at last come to believe it, and this accounts for your fancied ghosts. And now mark my words, both of you!" he said, turning to the two servants, with subdued fierceness, "if I ever discover either of you make the least attempt to escape, or ever mention the slightest word of ever having been here, you shall repent it the longest day you live! As for your mistress, I need say nothing on the subject to her—she has too much good sense to be annoyed by your silly fears, and, I fancy, will not try to escape. Is it not so, Miss Desmond?" he asked, turning to her abruptly.

"I most certainly shall obey you, my lord," said Alice, with calm dignity, though she had grown decidedly pale at his words.

"It is well," said the earl with a grim smile. "I trust you will enforce the necessity of similar obedience on those superstitious fools—you will have ample time to do so," he added, with a sneer. "Solitude and quiet will give rise to reflection, and doubtless you will all leave the old Moor Manor much improved by meditation and repose."

"Your lordship is in a facetious mood to-night," said Alice, a slight flush of indignation mantling her pale cheek. "As a gentleman, you should respect our misfortunes, in being *obliged* to stay here, too much to laugh at us."

"I beg your pardon, I did not mean to offend," replied the earl, bowing slightly, while a sarcastic smile curled his lip. "I regret solitude has not such charms for you as I imagined it would have. Doubtless the society of Lord Arndale——"

"Sir!" interrupted Alice, rising slowly to her feet, her eyes flashing with indignation.

"Oh, have I offended again?" said the earl, with mock contrition. "I am unhappily doomed to fall under your displeasure to-night, my dear Miss Desmond."

"Sir," said Alice, haughtily, "it doubtless affords you much pleasure to mock me; but I can assure you, in doing so, you are acting neither the part of a man nor a gentleman. The unhappy circumstances that have placed me in your power give you no right to insult an unprotected girl. I always had a higher opinion of the Earl of Danemore, and I am grieved now to be obliged to change it."

It was so strange, so unusual, so wonderful, for shy, gentle, timid Alice Desmond to speak such words, and in such a

tone, to anybody, much less to the dark, stern earl, that John and Janie looked at each other, completely astonished. Even the earl himself seemed slightly surprised ; but it was only for a moment, then the cold, sarcastic smile came back ; and in the dry, mocking tone, he had used before, he resumed :

“ It grieves me most deeply to stand under Miss Desmond’s displeasure ; but since it cannot be helped, I must be resigned. I had no idea she could make so good a speech—it is excellent for an impromptu one—a little too theatrical, but otherwise very good. There was a great actress lost in you, Miss Alice ? ”

Alice resumed her seat without taking notice of this taunting speech, and the earl, half ashamed of having spoken in such a tone to a lady, seated himself opposite, and gazed in moody silence into the glowing coals. He had never addressed Alice in such a manner before, and probably would not have done so now, had he not been unusually out of temper. The visit of the old woman annoyed him, and Alice’s refusal to tell him what she had said, annoyed him still more, and caused him to speak so insultingly to her ; but now that the first paroxysm of ill-temper had passed he began to regret his words, which he felt had lowered him forever in her estimation—for the earl of Danemore, notwithstanding his faults, prided himself on being always, and by every one considered, as a perfect gentleman.

A profound silence now fell upon the whole party. John and Janie gazed uneasily, first at one another, then at the

earl and Miss Desmond, and next at the gloomy shadows that flitted too and fro with the flickering firelight. Alice had crouched in the corner, her face covered with her hands, immovable, save when a slight, momentary shudder convulsed her slender frame. The earl still sat in moody, troubled thought, gazing fixedly into the fire.

And thus the weary hours dragged on and midnight approached. Once or twice during that time, the low, agonized groans resounded fearfully through the dismal silence, making all start and gaze wildly around; but then again all was still—save the loud howling of the wind—and the gloomy party gathered round the fire would again relapse into quiet. But now, as the terrible hour, so dreaded, drew nigh, all grew restless. Janie clung to John for protection, and hid her face in his shoulder. Alice involuntarily drew closer to the fire, and the earl himself seemed nervous and restless. Not one present but wished from the bottom of their hearts, that it was morning.

Suddenly, as if by magic, from the intense gloom at the further end of the room, the awful figure of the ghostly phantom came gliding forth. Flames of fire seemed issuing from its mouth, and as it noiselessly glided by them, it displayed to their horror-stricken gaze the horrible skull of a skeleton! Without seeming to touch the ground, it glided on, and with a terrible groan vanished through the wall, which opened, as if by magic, to receive it.

No one moved or spoke. A dreadful silence had fallen on them all, as they gazed in mute horror in each other's blanched faces.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WITCH OF THE MOOR AT A BALL.

“Down in the valley come meet me to-night,
And I will tell you your fortune truly
As ever was told, by the new moon’s light,
To a young maiden, shining as newly.”—*Moore.*

A thousand lights are flashing in the stately mansion of Dirritole. Carriage after carriage drives up to the gate of the court-yard, and their titled occupants pass out into the house. Wealth, and beauty, and rank, all are mingled here in gay confusion for the Countess of Danemore gives a ball to-night to honor the arrival of her niece, and no one thinks of refusing *her* invitations. Every room is glittering, and flashing, and radiant with light; sounds of music, laughter, and merry voices are all around; fairy forms, gorgeously clad, flit back and forth; handsome, stately titled peers and peeresses are here, a gorgeous array, glittering with jewels, moving through the crowded rooms, magnificent in their splendid array—all hastening to pay their respects to their hostess, who stands, flashing with jewels, and superb in the splendor of her wondrous beauty, ready to receive them. Her robe of purple velvet, fit for an empress, sweeps the carpet with its heavy folds; diamonds are flashing on her

snowy arms and bosom. But far more splendid than the peerless jewels are the large, mystic, Syrian eyes, half veiled by the long, sweeping, jetty lashes. A cluster of pure white lilies is nestling in her midnight locks, forming the most fitting ornament for those black, silky tresses. She looks colder and prouder to-night than when first we saw her ; it is as if amid the crowd by which she is surrounded, she has drawn farther and farther into herself—into that mysterious spirit-land in which she lives, and that while present, the loveliest lady there, unheeding alike the admiration and envy which she excites, her heart is far away—far away.

At a little distance stands the earl, amid a group of old noblemen, who, unheeding the gay scene around them, are taking snuff and chatting away on politics, as old gentlemen all over the world do. Yet, ever and anon, his eyes wander over to where my lady stands, with look of exultant pride, as he notices the admiration she every where excites, and the many looks of envy directed to himself by younger and handsomer men, who would willingly part with their coronet for one smile from her lips.

Standing in another part of the room, in the midst of a circle of old friends, is Marie Nelson. She looks a very handsome, well-preserved young widow, in her rich dress to-night—the *rouge* on her cheeks hiding the ravages time has made there, and giving unusual brilliancy to a really fine pair of eyes ; while the jet ornaments on her neck and arms give a degree of whiteness to her sallow skin.

Mrs. Nelson had been a coquette in her younger days, and

is so still, though years have slightly moderated her love of flirting ; therefore she is not at all insensible to the frequent glances of admiration cast toward her by disconsolate widowers and bachelors, nor is she deaf to the remark of a dilapidated-looking scion of nobility who levels his glass at her and emphatically declares her to be a “ dused fine woman.”

Mrs. Nelson tosses her head as she hears it, until her jet ornaments flash again, and inwardly wishes people didn't know she had a grown-up daughter, and feels half inclined to send Maggie off to her room—a project she might find some difficulty in, for that young lady is flirting with most praiseworthy diligence, with a highly-perfumed young officer, a renowned lady-killer, and most fascinating exquisite, known as Sir Harry Dudley, aid-de-camp to his grace, the Duke of —.

Maggie looks perfectly bewitching in a white silk, frosted with pearls—the only jewels she cares for. The bright curls float gracefully over her shoulders, only half confined by the bandeau of pearls that enclasps them. Every motion is instinct with life, and grace, and vivacity ; sparkling, enchanting, fascinating she is, and Sir Harry finds her such a contrast to the languid die-away, the proud and reserved ladies he is accustomed to, that it is no wonder he is charmed with her, as are half a dozen other young gentleman who surround her. Maggie, on her part, being by nature a most finished coquette, plays her cards so well, and bestows her smiles, and bows, and bewitching glances in so bewildering a manner, that before they are acquainted with her half an hour, they

are ready to blow out each other's brains for the "beautiful little American."

"And what sort of a place is America, Miss Nelson?" inquired Sir Harry. "I have never had the pleasure of visiting it yet, and feel quite curious to know."

"Oh! a most charming place," said Maggie, "where negroes grow wild out of the ground, like hop-vines—where the inhabitants live on liberty and hasty-pudding—where the babies, before they are a week old, call for a jack-knife, and make improvements in their cradle—where they are stupid enough to think that every honest man, even if a beggar, is as good as a lord—where——"

"Oh, Miss Nelson, I had no idea you were such a quiz," said the officer, with a look which he intended to be very killing.

"Quiz," repeated Maggie, opening her eyes, "'pon my word, I am not; it is the downright truth. Why, they actually keep a queer sort of an animal, called a *President*, in a place they call the White House, and would you believe it, they were actually foolish enough to prefer this president to his blessed majesty, the King of England. And when his aforesaid sacred majesty sent a body of enlightened and tender-hearted English soldiers, who never killed, nor robbed, nor pillaged, nor ravaged, except when they had a *chance*, to instruct the rebel Yankees, and teach them their duty, these wicked and cowardly Yankees actually *coaxed* these brave and virtuous Englishmen to leave them to their fate of being freemen. These Americans, of course, say they drove the

British from their country ; but we know better, don't we? The tender-hearted emissaries of the king did not wish to kill those poor ragamuffins, and so left them in contemptuous pity. That's *my* belief, anyway."

Maggie's face wore a look of solemn gravity, but there was a merry twinkle in her eyes that contradicted her words. Sir Harry looked at her, rather puzzled to know whether she were serious, or laughing at him.

"That is certainly a new version of the story," he remarked, after a pause. "So you like England, do you?"

"Oh, immensely, replied Maggie, to the infinite amusement of Charley Sidney, who stood listening behind her, "especially your fogs, which I consider perfectly delightful. It is so exceedingly charming and novel to me, who have always been accustomed to a cloudless sky and extensive prospect, to look out and see nothing but a thick bank of fog, like the romantic vapor of a washtub—a delightful article which they use in America, but which, I suppose, they have never seen here. And then your houses: I, you know, have never lived in any but wide, new airy mansions; so I am perfectly entranced with the great, big, rickety, crumbling, tumble-down castles they have here, which are always associated in my mind with the ages of chivalry and with rat-traps. Your stage-coaches, too, deserve a word of praise. You see, in America, we have a sort of chain-lightning article, they call rail-cars, which whirl people off at the rate of fifty miles per minute, so different from your fascinating stage-coaches, which pitch you up in the air one minute, making you feel

like the doctor's bottle, which when 'taken,' was to be 'well shaken,' and jerking you down the next, giving you the delightful idea that the coach is going to tip over, and make you break your neck in the ditch; and so you are jolted to the end of your journey, going about a mile every hour. Oh! England, altogether, is a paradise on earth."

A suppressed burst of laughter followed the conclusion of Maggie's speech, and Sir Harry looked, to use Charles Sidney's phrase, "infernally sheepish." The fact was, that the young baronet was still in doubt whether Maggie was quizzing him or not. Quiz *him!* the thought was presumptuous. A little saucy Yankee, whose waist he could span with one hand, quiz *him*, the handsomest fellow in the service, about whom dozens of ladies were breaking their hearts—quiz *him!* Nonsense, the girl must be serious.

"I say, Charley, who is she?" said a tall, dark, handsome, distinguished-looking young man, turning to Mr. Sidney.

"Hallo, Arndale, by all that's glorious!" exclaimed Charley. "When did you arrive?"

"About an hour ago, in most deplorable ignorance that my lady Danemore was giving a ball. But that's not answering my question. Who is that quizzical little lady?"

"Have you seen any of the family since you arrived?"

"No; but why don't you answer my question?"

"Then you have not heard anything particular lately?"

"No, confound you, can't you tell me what she is, and stop asking impertinent questions?"

"Oh, she's a cousin of yours—one Miss Maggie Nelson, at

your service, said a silvery voice at his ear ; “ a sort of half-civilized Yankee they have brought you to tame.”

Lord Arndale turned hastily, and saw standing before him, her bright face radiant with smiles, the same young lady who had so unmercifully quizzed the aid-de-camp a few moments before.

Being taken altogether by surprise at her answer, and not quite comprehending her meaning, Arndale stood regarding her with a half-puzzled look, which put Maggie completely out of patience.

“ Charley Sidney, do introduce us ! ” she exclaimed, turning impatiently to that young gentleman. “ Don’t you see how stupid he looks, standing there ? I suppose he doesn’t understand my English.”

“ Certainly, I’ll introduce you with pleasure,” said Charley, gravely. “ Miss Nelson, allow me to present to your favorable notice this dignified young gentleman, who happens to be a cousin of yours, and who, furthermore, rejoices in the title of Lord Arndale. A very deserving young gent, and not half so sulky as he looks—for which latter blessing he may thank *me*, as I have had him under training for the last two or three years, without receiving the slightest remuneration in return. ‘ Virtue is its own reward,’ I suppose ; and it is likely to be all the reward *I*ll ever get in this world,” said Charley, concluding with a deep sign.

“ Confound your impudence ! ” said Lord Arndale, with difficulty repressing a laugh. “ But is it possible that this young lady is my American cousin, of whom I have often heard ? ”

“Waal, she is,” replied Maggie, with the usual twang of “down East,” and dropping, as she spoke, a little awkward courtesy. “How d’ye deu.”

“Tolerable well, I thank you,” replied Lord Arndale, with a smile, “and delighted to see my charming little cousin.” and he raised her hand gallantly to his lips.

“Humph, I’m glad to hear it,” said Maggie. “I thought that time you weren’t going to own me at all. I think you’re all the queerest set, all you English gents—Sir This, and Lord That, and Duke of ’Tother Thing. Are your officers all as green as that one I was talking to in the splendid uniform?”

“Poor Sir Harry!” said Lord Arndale; “how could you be so cruel as to quiz him so?”

“Just for fun,” said Maggie, with an expressive shrug. “But look—see, they’re all crowding over here; let us go and see what is the matter.”

At this moment Kate Sidney hurriedly approached, looking vexed and rather excited. As she caught sight of Lord Arndale, she hastily approached, and said:

“Oh, Harry, I am so glad I have found you! I wish you would go and make that strange old woman leave the room. She says she wants to tell fortunes, but uncle will be so angry. Do try and make her go; there’s no use in asking Charley because he would want nothing better than making her stay.”

“Who is she?” said Lord Arndale, rather surprised.

“I am sure I don’t know. I think I heard some one say,

she was an old fortune-teller, called the Witch of the Moor ; but do try and get her out. I will take charge of Maggie till you come back."

"Indeed, then you won't do any such thing, Cousin Kate," said Maggie, decidedly. "I'm just going to have my fortune told, too. See if I don't! Come on, Cousin Harry." And Miss Nelson, pushed her arm unceremoniously through his, and hurried onward to where a crowd had gathered around the old woman.

Lord Arndale and Maggie stood for a moment, silently contemplating the scene before them. Standing in the midst, with one skinny arm raised like an inspired prophetess, her hood pushed back, exposing her brown skinny face, with its piercing, glittering black eyes, was the witch. Standing by her side, quietly regarding the dazzling scene around was, the little girl, Magdalen—her wondrous beauty striking all the spectators with astonishment. The huge, fierce blood-hound, Death, crouched behind her—glaring around with his red, fiendish eyes, as though only awaiting the signal to spring.

"Oh, cousin, don't send her away," whispered Maggie ; "I want to get my fortune told."

Had Lord Arndale been inclined to refuse, he still could not have done so, for the old fortune-teller was now encircled by a bevy of laughing faces all anxious to have their fortunes told. There was an evil sneer on the old hag's face, as one by one she foretold a "long life, a lovely wife," or husband, as the case might be.

"Oh, Lord Arndale," exclaimed Maggie, suddenly, "*will*

you look at the beautiful little girl? Oh! *did* you ever in all your life see anything half so handsome?"

Lord Arndale followed the direction of her finger, and as his eye fell upon the face of the child, standing erect and motionless, he gave a sudden start, and vaguely thought that he had seen some one like her before. But where, he strove to remember, but in vain; yet the more he looked, the more he was startled by the resemblance.

"Oh, dear me! *did* you ever see any one half so handsome," repeated Maggie, in a sort of transport. "Such eyes! they are like stars. I mean to ask her what's her name, see if I don't?" and before he could prevent her, Maggie had vanished among the crowd.

"Kate, Kate Sidney, come here and have your fortune told," called a young lady, who suddenly caught sight of Kate.

"Nonsense, Lady Mary. I don't want to," said Kate, smiling at the eager look of the other, who caught hold of her arm, to draw her forward.

"Oh, but you shall, though," said Lady Mary, resolutely; "there give her your hand, and see what the future has in store for you. For me, it has a long life, an interesting family of red-haired children, and a soldier for a husband—Sir Harry Dudley, I expect."

This last was whispered in Kate's ear—at the same moment she reluctantly forced her to give her hand to the strange woman.

The old woman took it, and gazed long and earnestly

down in the palm, then, looking up, said, in an impressive voice :

“ I see here danger, and sorrow, and shame, and disgrace, and, it may be, *death*. Therē is danger to yourself near hand, sorrow for some one near you at present, shame for one, the proudest here to-night, and disgrace to the house of Danemore, and *death* either to you or for some near relation. All is dark and ominous here.”

She flung Kate's hand violently from her, as she spoke, unheeding the scornful smile with which that young lady heard the dark fate in store for her. As she stepped back, a voice fell on their ears that made every one start, it was so deep and stern.

“ What is the matter here?” cried the earl. “ Who is this old hag?”

Before any one could reply, the old woman pushed them aside, and stood boldly confronting the nobleman, her black eyes gleaming with a sinister light.

“ Who are you, old woman, and what do you want here?” said the earl, harshly.

“ Who am I? I am Mother Wail, the Witch of the Moor. What do I want here? I came here because it was my pleasure to do so, and when it is my pleasure to leave I will do so, and not till then.”

“ Insolent!” exclaimed the earl, growing crimson with passion, “ my servants shall force you out. Here, John, Peter, William, force this old hag out.”

“ Let them do it if they dare!” said Mother Wail, coolly. “ Hear, Death!”

With a low, deep, hoarse growl, the fierce blood-hound sprang to her side.

“Why don’t *you* put me out?” said the old woman, with an exultant laugh at the ominous silence that followed the display of the dog’s teeth. I don’t know anything about you, do I?”

Something in her tone made the earl think of the old Mool Manor, and he grew deadly pale. The old woman noticed it, and turning to the wondering spectators, she said, with a triumphant chuckle :

“You see, my fine ladies and lords, he won’t put me out after all. Oh, what it is to know the secrets of great folks. Stand aside, my lord, I see your fair countess over there, and I am anxious to pay her my respects.”

Before any one could interpose to prevent her, she had passed through the crowd, and stood before Lady Danemore. The large eyes were opened in the old languid manner at first, and fixed upon her, and then upon the child, while every drop of blood left her face, and she was forced to gasp for breath. Mother Wail approached, and whispered a word in her ear ; the next moment all present were startled by a loud, wild, piercing cry of almost mortal agony, as the countess fell prone, senseless to the ground.

All present rushed forward to raise her, and taking advantage of the confusion, Mother Wail seized Magdalen, and vanished in the crowd.

CHAPTER X.

THE COUNTESS GOES A - VISITING.

“Alas ! earth’s ties are with her, like the wave
That brightly clasps the shore,
Then breaks and seeks its grave !”—*Upham*.

ON a couch in her elegantly-furnished chamber, looking paler than usual, but otherwise just the same, lay lady Danemore. Half-buried, as usual, amid a pile of soft cushions, with the long lashes resting heavily upon the oval cheeks, she wandering again in the land of thought.

Of what was she thinking? Kate Sidney asked herself the question, as, from her seat by the window, she sat silently regarding her. Was it of her childhood? Of days past and gone forever, or of the sorrows or joys of the past? No one might tell—those veiled eyes spoke not.

It was the afternoon following the night of the ball. Long and deadly was my lady’s swoon; and for hours after her return to consciousness, she had lain in a sort of stupor, like one awakening from some dreadful trance. An unusual silence reigned through Dirritole; the servants glided about on tip-toe, like ghosts; for, besides Lady Danemore’s illness, Mrs. Nelson also lay an invalid in her own chamber. Naturally very nervous, the wild shriek of the countess, and the cry that followed, “She is dead—she is dead !” startled her so,

that she fell into violent hysterics, and had to be carried to her room, where, since then, she had obliged black Venus and her daughter to remain, her close attendants, while Kate took her place as the countess' nurse.

The rest of the family had dispersed in various directions. The earl, after watching by his lady's bedside during the night, on finding her free from danger in the morning, had mounted his horse and rode off. Lord Arndale, to his surprise and consternation, on learning from Charley, for the first time, of the disappearance of Alice Desmond, immediately rode over to the Pines, and had not returned; and Charley himself was disconsolately left to his own resources, all alone.

There was profound silence in the chamber; suddenly, Lady Danemore spoke.

"What time is it?"

"Half-past three," answered Kate, glancing at her watch.

There was another long interval of silence, which was again broken by the countess:

"Send Bess L'Olise to me!"

Kate gave a little stare of astonishment, and rang for a servant, to whom she delivered the order. It was an unusual thing for Lady Danemore to request to see any one; but Bess was a favorite with her—at least as much of a favorite as one of such a reserved disposition could possibly have.

Many wondered what was the reason of this; perhaps it was because Bess was her country-woman—for it was generally surmised that the countess was French—perhaps it

was because she knew how firm and faithful Bess could be if she chose, in any matter of import; perhaps it was because she knew how much attached to her mademoiselle was. But from whatever cause it was, Bess was regarded in the envious light of a favorite of Lady Danemore.

On the present occasion, Kate's message found the young lady sitting at the window of the Lodge, embroidering a collar, and humming a French song, looking excessively neat and pretty, as she always did. A French girl makes a handsome face and fine figure out of very poor material; and with only the advantage of a clear, brown skin, plump, red cheeks, and a pair of bright, black eyes, Bess L'Olise passed for a very handsome girl; while an English girl, with far greater personal attractions, would have been called decidedly plain. Where the secret lies, we know not—only it is so; perhaps it is the taste in dress of the former that makes the difference.

Bess was fond of rich, dark colors—they harmonized well with her brown complexion. She now wore, jauntily, on her head, turban fashion, a silk handkerchief, consisting of alternate stripes of scarlet and black, which set off wonderfully the smooth, shining, black hair beneath. Her dress was a crimson merino; and with her long, dangling, gold ear-drops, her pretty collar and cuffs, and her dark, rich turban, she looked as pretty a little creole as one could wish to see.

So Charley Sidney seemed to think, as Bess entered the hall, where he lay lazily extended on a couch in the sun, smoking a cigar, and watching with tropical indolence, the curling smoke, as it slowly wreathed upward.

“Why, my dear, where have you been this age? I haven’t seen you I don’t know when!” said Charley accosting her.

“You don’t *care* where, I guess, Monsieur Charles!” replied Bess, with a bow and a smile, raising her hand to her turban, military fashion, in a manner peculiarly graceful; you have been so occupied with Ma’m selle *l’Americaine* since her arrival, that you have quite forgotten all your old friends!”

“Now, Bess, that’s positively too bad!” said Charley, taking his cigar in his finger and thumb. “She was a stranger, you know, and I had to patronize her a little; but I hadn’t the least idea of forgetting you. On my honor, you look prettier than ever; that head-dress is vastly becoming; it’s positively captivating. I think I’ll get one of them myself—how do you think I would look in it?”

“Oh, bewitching!” said Bess, laughing, and tossing her head until the gold drops flashed and glittered in the sunlight. “Miss Marguerite could never resist you with one, I am sure!”

“Pooh! never mind her!” said Charley; “if it captivates *you*, it is all I want. Where are you going now?—don’t be in a hurry—stay here with me,”

“Stay with you, indeed!” said Bess, saucily; “don’t you remember how impertinent you were the last time you got me to stay with you? Besides, I can’t—I am in a hurry.”

“Where are you going?”

“To my lady—she sent for me.”

“Her ladyship? What does *she* want with *you*?” ejaculated Charley, in surprise.

“*Bon ciel!* as if I knew! Let me go, Monsieur Charles! You must send for Mademoiselle *l’Americaine*, if you want some one to talk to!” said Bess, with another coquettish toss of her turbaned head, that made the gold drops flash and glitter again.

“Upon my honor, Miss Bess,” began Charley: but, without waiting to hear him, she darted past him and ran up stairs, laughing and singing the words of the old ballad:

“It is good to be valiant and wise,
It is good to be loyal and true;
It is good to be off with the old love
Before you are on with the new.”

And kissing her hand to him as she reached the head of the stairs, with an arch smile, she vanished.

In answer to her low rap, Kate opened the chamber door, and pointing silently to where Lady Danemore lay, she took her departure.

Bess glided noiselessly to where she lay, and sinking on her knees, raised her hand respectfully to her lips. This touching act, slight as it was, seemed to awaken a host of long-buried memories in the breast of the countess. She raised the drooping eyelids, and fixing her large, dark eyes earnestly on Bess’s face, said:

“Do you know why I have sent for you?”

“No, madame.”

“Have you no idea?”

“Not the slightest, madame.”

There was a long pause after this, during which the countess remained steadily regarding Bess, as if striving to guess how far she might confide in her. The frank, open face of the little French girl seemed to give her confidence, and she slowly inquired :

“Have you heard what happened here last night?”

“Does madame mean her sudden illness? Yes—I have heard of that.”

“Have you heard anything else?”

“Except that the frightful old Witch of the Moor was here—nothing.

“How do people account for my sudden illness?” inquired Lady Danemore, speaking with an effort.

Bess lifted her eyes with a look of innocent astonishment.

“Why, to the fright, to be sure! They say the sudden appearance of that dreadful old woman frightened you into a fit. She scared Mrs. Nelson into hysterics, too.”

Lady Danemore drew a long breath, as though a weight had suddenly been lifted off her mind. Then, fixing her beautiful eyes full on the face of the young girl, she said :

“Child, do you know why I have sent for you to tell me this, in preference to any of the family?”

“No, madame.”

“Nor do I; and yet I have done so. I would I knew whether I might trust you or not?”

The last words were spoken more to herself than to Bess; but the young girl answered quickly :

"I love madame too much to betray anything she may tell me. Bess L'Olise can be faithful to those who trust her."

The accent of wounded pride in which she spoke struck Lady Danemore; and, laying her hand caressingly on her head, she said, softly:

"Child, I meant not to offend you. I spoke before I thought; but there are so few in this world we can trust to."

There was a sudden bitterness in her tone that moved Bess, and she silently kissed the hand that lay passively in hers.

"Bess," asked the countess, suddenly, "will you swear on this, never to reveal what I may disclose to you to-night?" said the countess, drawing from her bosom a small ebony cross, and presenting it to Bess.

"Madame, forgive me; but I cannot bind myself blindly by oaths!" said Bess, drawing back.

Child, child, I will ask you to do nothing wrong; there will not be the least shadow of evil in what you will have to do," said the lady, earnestly. "All I wish is, your solemn promise of secrecy."

"There is no crime in what you wish me to do?" inquired Bess, hesitatingly.

"None, I solemnly assure you."

"And what do you wish, madame?"

"To swear eternal secrecy of all you may hear or see—of all I may require," said her ladyship, solemnly. "Can you not trust my word when I assure you it is not wrong?"

"Pardon, my lady, for doubting you. "I swear," said Bess, kissing the cross.

"Thank you," said the countess, a grateful smile giving inexpressible sweetness to her beautiful face. "You shall never repent your promise!"

Bess bowed in silence, and stood eagerly awaiting what was to come next.

"Do you know where this old woman, this witch, resides?" asked Lady Danemore, after a long pause.

"Yes, madame; in a little lonely hut on the moor."

"Have you ever been there?" continued her ladyship.

Bess crimsoned perceptibly through her brown skin,

"Once only, my lady," she replied, hesitatingly. "I was silly enough to go have my fortune told."

"Who is that child, Madge—I mean, who is that little girl who accompanied her here last night?" inquired my lady, speaking as though the words hurt her.

"I do not know, madame," replied Bess. "Some say she is her grandchild; others that she is some stolen child; others that the little girl's parents pay her for keeping her. But, *ma foi*, nobody knows."

A shudder, so evident that it made the little Parisian start, convulsed the frame of my lady. Bess regarded her in utter bewilderment.

"Does she treat the child kindly?" she inquired, after another long pause, in a voice that faltered in spite of herself.

"I am sure *I* do not know," replied Bess, opening her eyes in bewilderment. "She accompanies her everywhere, but

never speaks a word to any one. I think she cannot speak English."

"Ah! the old woman is a foreigner, then?"

"Yes, your ladyship—she is French. Oh, dear, dear France!" said Bess, with an involuntary sigh.

Lady Danemore turned away, and shaded her face with her hands.

For several minutes there was profound silence; then, turning to Bess, the countess said, in a hurried whisper:

"Will you accompany me to-night to the residence of this old woman?"

"*Madame?*" exclaimed Bess, starting back in surprise.

"It is necessary I should go!" said the countess, with impatient vehemence. "It was for this I sent for you—for this I made you swear secrecy—and you must not fail me now!"

"But, madame, think of the danger. To take such a long, dismal walk over the wild, lonely moor, after night, in your present state of health, might be fatal," said Bess in a tone of distress.

"I do not care. Go I must, and shall!" said the countess, vehemently. "If you will not accompany me, then I must find my way alone."

"Oh, my dear mistress, you *know* I would accompany you to the end of the earth," replied Bess, earnestly. "It is only of the danger to yourself I speak. It is a long, weary distance, and you would drop with fatigue before reaching it."

"How far is it?"

"I do not know; many long miles, I think."

“Can you ride?”

“On horseback—yes madame.”

“Then could you not get two of the horses out for us? You can saddle them yourself. My horse is there, and Miss Sidney’s. We can ride, if we cannot walk.”

“If my lady is *determined* to go, I can do so. But I implore you——”

“Hush! girl—hush! You cannot move me in my resolution. Can you have the horses ready?” interrupted the countess.

“Yes madame. At what hour?”

“About eleven—the family will have retired before then. No one will disturb me if I desire to be left alone; and at that hour be prepared, and I will come to you.”

“Where shall I meet you with the horses, madame?”

“You can stand under the old ash trees. No one will notice you there, should they chance to pass. And now, remember you have bound yourself to secrecy.”

“I shall not forget, madame. After to-night, I will remember no longer what may occur. I never betray trust.”

“It is well. You may go.”

She waved her hand, as a sign to depart, and Bess silently arose, and quitted the apartment.

“There is something mysterious about this,” muttered Bess, as she tripped down the long, winding staircase. “What can this secret visit mean? The Countess of Danemore visiting the old Witch of the Moor. *Ma foi!* what would the world say if it heard it? Well, it is none of *my* business,

I suppose, but I *would* like to know. How singular, too, she should choose *me*, above every one else, as her confidante in this matter. But I suppose there was no one else who could guide her there that she would like to trust. Well, I will be faithful to her, and bide my time."

She reached the outer hall as she spoke, where she found Charley Sidney still lying. Touching her turban, by way of salute, in the easy, graceful manner peculiar to her, she would have passed him; but he detained her.

"I say, Bess," he exclaimed, "what did you mean by that verse you sung, going up-stairs?"

"Does not monsieur know?"

"Know? How should I?—it's all a profound mystery to *me*!"

"Oh! monsieur," said Bess, in a very shocked tone, "how can you say so? Three weeks ago, did you not swear eternal fidelity to me, on a blank leaf in your pocket-book? and now you have deserted me for *la petite Americaine*. Oh! monsieur, how *could* you do so? Surely you might have taken a month to forget me; but to do so in three weeks—to leave me forlornly to wear the willow! Oh! Monsieur Charles, I will never forgive you!"

Bess spoke in a very dolorous tone; but the merry twinkle in her bright eyes bespoke that his desertion was not likely to break her heart.

Charley listened to her harangue, looking terribly conscious; and made an attempt to vindicate himself, as she ceased; but, without waiting to hear it, Bess darted off, with a ringing laugh,

The great hall-clock of Dirritole had just tolled the hour of eleven as a tall, slender figure, muffled in a long, dark cloak, came gliding from her chamber, passed noiselessly through the upper hall, down the long stair-case, along the lower hall, and out into the court-yard in front.

The night was dark, save the faint light of the stars, but close and sultry.

The muffled figure passed rapidly along, feeling her way, as if by intuition, through the darkness, until she reached a grove of swaying ash trees, under whose shade stood another muffled figure—smaller, and not so slender as the first.

Two horses, saddled and ready for the road, were tied to the trees.

“No one has passed, madame,” said Bess L’Oliſe, in a hurried whisper. “Here is your horse; let me assist you to mount.”

Lady Danemore placed one tiny foot in Bess’s hand, and sprang lightly into the saddle, with the ease and dexterity of a practiced horsewoman. Gathering up the reins, she started forward, and Bess was in another moment in the saddle and by her side.

“We can ride as rapidly as we choose now, my lady,” said Bess, “if it does not fatigue you too much.”

The only reply of the countess was a smart cut of her whip, which made the animal bound forward at a rapid gallop.

“Yonder is the moor,” said Bess, pointing with her whip. “We must ride slowly now; the ground is treacherous.”

They rode forward slowly and cautiously, Bess looking

keenly around, least they should miss the hut of the old woman.

As the old manor came in view, casting its long, dreary shadow over the lonely moor, both paused a moment to contemplate it. Not the least sound or sign of light betrayed that it had occupants.

"What strange old building is that!" asked Lady Danemore, after a pause.

"It is called the Old Moor Manor," replied Bess, with a half shudder, as she gazed on the gloomily pile. "It has been deserted for many and many a year. No one ever passes it, for it is said to be haunted by evil spirits. Our lady protect us!" and Bess crossed herself devoutly.

How little did the speaker dream who were at that moment its occupants!

"Had we not better ride on, madame?" continued Bess, uneasily, as Lady Danemore still remained gazing fixedly at it; "this is such a lonely place, and the night is passing."

The countess started, as if from a dream, and followed Bess in the direction to which she had turned.

"I am afraid we will have trouble in finding the place," remarked Bess, glancing anxiously around. "It is not easily found in daylight, and it will be much more difficult now."

As she spoke, a low clump of stunted spruce met her eye, and, with an exclamation of joy, she started forward, exclaiming:

"Thank Heaven! there it is at last!"

Lady Danemore followed her; and, turning an abrupt

angle which concealed it from their view, the home of the Witch of the Moor stood before them.

It was a little low hut, with one window in front, but not a ray of light proceeded from it. All around was as dark and silent as the grave. The stunted trees behind so hid it from view, that one might pass fifty times over the moor, even in broad daylight, without discovering it.

Bess leaped from her horse, and, tying him to a tree, assisted the countess to alight; then approaching the low door, she raised the end of her whip, and rapped loudly.

A low, fierce growl from Death, was the only answer they received.

Again Bess raised her whip and rapped, this time louder than before.

Another hoarse growl from Death followed this, accompanied by a hissing sound, and a leap against the door inside, as though of a cat.

"Holy Saints protect us!" exclaimed Bess, quaking with terror.

"Knock again!" said Lady Danemore, impetuously.

Bess obeyed, and fierce growls of the blood-hound and sharp hisses of the cat, grew absolutely appalling. Suddenly, a footstep was heard, and they heard the shrill, sharp voice of Mother Wail, exclaiming:

"Down, Death! Be quiet, Imp! Who's there?"

"What shall I say?" whispered Bess.

"Two women, tell her," replied the countess.

"Only two women," answered Bess, raising her voice.

“And what do ‘two women’ want this hour of the night?” called the croaking voice of the witch.

“To have their fortunes told,” replied Bess, at a venture, after waiting in vain for some suggestion by her mistress.

“I don’t tell fortunes at midnight,” said the old woman, harshly. “You may go home as you came.”

“Tell her we will pay her well—she loves money, whispered the lady, hurriedly.

“We will pay you whatever you ask,” called Bess, “only let us in.”

A moment’s silence followed this, as though Mother Wail was deliberating with herself about this new proposal. A moment after, she said :

“How am I to know you are only two women?—you may be deceiving me.”

“Indeed I am not. There are only two of us, I assure you,” answered Bess.

“Well, I will see. If you are lying, I will set my dog on you, and tear you to pieces!”

“Heaven protect us!” ejaculated Bess, in terror.

The sounds of bolts withdrawing now fell upon their ears, and a moment after the door was cautiously opened, and the head of the witch thrust out. Satisfied, at length, that they were speaking the truth, she re-entered, and, a moment after, appeared with a light, and bade them enter.

As they did so, the huge dog, Death, sprang forward, with the evident intention of fulfilling the old hag’s threat; while the cat—an enormous black Tom—with eyes like coals of

fire, stood in the middle of the floor, its back bristling up, and its fierce eyes glaring like a demon's!

Terrified beyond measure, Bess sprang toward the door, with a shriek of terror.

"He! he! he!" chucked the old beldame; "you see, my fine ladies, I am not without protectors. Down, Death!"—to the dog—"Keep still, Imp!"—to the cat. "Well, ladies, so you want your fortunes told."

She raised the lamp as she spoke, until its light fell full upon them. Lady Danemore had thrown back her hood, and as the old woman's eye fell upon her, she started back, while the lamp nearly fell from her hand.

"*Madelene!*" she ejaculated, in amazement. "So! the time I have waited for so long has come at last, and Madelene Desbreaux stands again beneath my roof."

There was a malignant smile of triumph on her wrinkled face as she ceased speaking, that completely astounded Bess. She glanced at Lady Danemore, who stood, cold, proud, and calm as ever, save that her eyes wandered restlessly round the squalid apartment, as if seeking something in vain. As Mother Wail ceased speaking, she said to her, hurriedly:

"Is there no other room where this young girl can remain for a few moments. I wish to speak with you in private?"

"In private!" repeated the old crone, with a mocking sneer. "I thought you came to have your fortune told. Shall I tell you the past or the future, Madelene?" He! he! he!"

There was something almost demoniacal in the look of tri-

umph with which she regarded the countess, who leaned against the wall, covered her face with her hands, and groaned aloud.

“Come this way, my dear,” said the fortune-teller, in her taunting tone; “this fine lady wishes her fortune told in private, it seems. I hardly think it would do to proclaim it to the world *yet*. Stay in there.”

She pushed aside a coarse blanket that hung at the further end of the hovel, disclosing another room, equal in size and shape with the one they had left. An oil lamp, which stood burning dimly on a rude slab table was the only light in the room. A rude straw pallet on the floor, two or three little benches of the roughest kind, a broken chair, some crockery and cooking utensils of the coarsest description, and huge bundles of herbs sticking out from the rafters comprised the furniture. Another blanket, similar to that by which she had entered, hung at the end of the room. Bess was half tempted to lift it, and see what was inside; but the fear of Mother Wail restrained her, and she drew back.

“I wonder how far back the old hovel extends,” thought Bess, seating herself on one of the benches; “and I *would* like to know what is in there. Where can the little girl be, I wonder? Perhaps that is her sleeping-room. Oh, heaven! what a place to live in. I shall not breathe freely until it is out of sight. And how in the name of all that is wonderful can this horrible old hag know my lady? Calling her Mad-elene, too. Oh! what would I not give to know what all this mystery means?”

Bess paused to listen as the sound of voices from without met her ear. Lady Danemore she could hear speaking, earnestly supplicating, at times almost passionately, while Mother Wail still maintained her bitter, jibing tone, sometimes varying it to one of subdued firmness. Both spoke in French; but Bess could not at first distinguish the words. Suddenly she heard Lady Danemore say, in a voice of suppressed anguish:

“And you refuse—you refuse! Will *nothing* induce you to break this resolution? I will give you gold—everything you wish, only comply with my request!”

“Nothing,” answered the old woman, firmly. “Revenge is dearer than gold.”

“And oh, great Heaven! *have* you not been revenged? Have you not rendered me wretched and miserable forever!” said the voice of Lady Danemore.

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed the beldame. “Did I not tell you *then* I would be revenged. I swore not to rest in my grave until I saw that proud head laid low. I will pursue you to your dying day; and before long, Madeline Desbreaux, the world shall know you as you really are. Until that time comes, I will dog your steps like your shadow—escape from me you *cannot*. And *he* for whom you would die, you shall never meet again on earth. I have said it, and my words NEVER fail!”

A groan of mortal anguish came from the lips of the countess.

The heart of Bess stood still with astonishment and horror.

She listened in vain to catch what followed; for though Mother Wail still spoke, her voice had sunk to a hoarse, hissing whisper. No sound came from Lady Danemore, save the same low moan of bitter agony, that made Bess grow white with undefined fear.

Suddenly the blanket at the entrance was pushed rudely aside, and Mother Wail entered. Bess almost fell with terror as she looked on her. The wrinkled, sallow face was almost purple with suppressed passion; the glittering black eyes were blazing with evil light. Turning to Bess, she said, hurriedly:

“Go home. Your mistress is waiting for you.”

Bess waited for no second bidding; but rising hurriedly from her seat, she passed to the outer apartment. The countess stood leaning against the wall, her arms lying powerless by her side, her face white as that of the dead, the lips of a dreadful livid blue, while she gasped as if for breath. Forgetting everything save the terrible fear that her mistress was dying, Bess sprang forward, and caught her cold hand in both of hers. Lady Danemore did not appear to hear or see her—her eyes were fixed with a glazed, stony stare on vacancy.

“Oh! my lady, my dear lady!” exclaimed Bess, in distress, “do come away. Oh! good Heaven! she will die!”

“No fear, venomous reptiles live long,” said the old woman, bitterly. “Come, begone, both of you!”

Her words seemed to rouse Lady Danemore from the trance into which she was falling. With a momentary strength, she

drew her cloak around her, and quitted the hut, followed by Bess. Mother Wail closed the door loudly after them, drew the bolt, the light disappeared, and they were left alone and in darkness, standing on the dreary moor.

Bess assisted Lady Danemore to mount, and then sprang into the saddle herself, with an inward prayer of thanksgiving that the terrible visit was over. The cold, raw wind of the coming morning blew chillingly over the moor. Lady Danemore, with a shiver, drew her cloak around her, the hand that held the reins relaxed, her head sank on her bosom, and Bess expected every instant to see her fall.

“Oh! my dear, dear lady!” she exclaimed, in the utmost distress, “do, *do* try to bear up until we reach home. Oh! that we had never come on this unfortunate journey. Do, *do* try to ride on till we get home!”

With an effort Lady Danemore raised her head, and strove to comply. The old Manor was passed, the moon lay behind them; but the eastern sky began to grow gray with the hue of coming morn; and the countess again began to droop.

“Oh! what shall I do, what *shall* I do?” cried poor Bess, in the last extremity of dismay. “Oh! my lady, *do* try to bear up a little longer. In half an hour we can be home; and if we delay any longer the family will be up, and all will be discovered.”

This last appeal produced more effect than anything that had yet been said. Lady Danemore aroused herself; and though her face was blanched to the hue of death from the inward agony of her mind, yet she rode resolutely forward;

and soon, to the great delight of Bess, the peaked gables and high turrets of Dirritole came in view.

Bess assisted Lady Danemore to alight. Utterly exhausted, she tottered forward, and would have fallen, had not the faithful little French girl assisted her. As they reached the hall door, the countess paused, and said, with an effort:

“Thank you, that will do, I can go myself now.”

Bess opened the door to admit her; and then closing it noiselessly, started to where she had left the horses. The countess went forward a few steps, swayed to and fro, then reeled, and fell heavily to the floor, like one dead.

CHAPTER XI.

KATE MEETS HER FRIEND.

“What though on Love’s altar the flame that is glowing
Is brighter? yet Friendship’s is steadier far!
One wavers and turns with each breeze that is blowing,
And is but a meteor—the other’s a star,”

KATE SIDNEY sat at her chamber window lost in thought. For hours she had lain tossing restlessly on her pillow, thinking of her absent friend, and striving in vain to solve the mystery, until finding sleep impossible, she had arisen, thrown on her white cashmere morning-gown, and seating herself by the window, leaned her head on her hand, and gave way to the thoughts that came crowding thick and fast through her mind.

Kate Sidney was not one to form a friendship with every young lady she met; in fact, though she made many *acquaintances*, she made very few friends—but when once made, her friendship was not easily broken. Alice Desmond had been the companion of her childhood, her school-mate in after years, and her firm friend now. They had always shared each other’s secrets, troubles and pleasures.

Alice looked up to Kate always for assistance, relying on her strong, calm judgment in emergencies which she otherwise would have shrunk from; and Kate loved Alice for her gentle

disposition, her sweet, confiding nature—the very opposite of her own. Perhaps it was this very contrast that drew them so fondly together. Alice was dreary and romantic, while Kate was the most matter-of-fact young lady in the world. The friends had never been separated before; and this circumstance made Kate Sidney feel it the more keenly now. She strove in vain to assign some reason for Alice's mysterious conduct. She had left home voluntarily—that her note testified; but why had she done so? It was so unlike all she had ever known of her, that Kate was tempted to doubt the evidence of her senses; but, with a sigh, she was obliged to acknowledge it was stern reality.

From the train of absorbing thought into which she had fallen, she was suddenly aroused by the sound of a heavy fall in the hall below. She started to her feet to listen; something like a groan fell upon her ear, and made her blood run cold. But Kate Sidney was morally and physically brave—there was not a drop of cowardly blood in her veins, and she hesitated but for a moment. Seizing a light, she passed from her chamber through a long suite of apartments, through the upper hall, down the long stair-case, and into the lower hall; and there—a sight met her eyes that froze her blood with horror.

Lying prone on her face on the ground, and bathed in blood, lay Lady Danemore. Her long black hair fell wildly around her, clotted with gore, which had formed a little pool on the carpet by her side, while a little dark stream flowed steadily from her mouth.

For a moment, Kate stood rooted to the ground with horror, gasping for breath, and sickening at the awful sight before her; then recovering herself by a mighty effort, she went forward, and raised the head of the prostrate lady. The great black eyes stared wide open, vacant and lusterless, and glazed as though in death; the face was white and cold as that of a corpse, save where it was dreadfully dabbled with blood; the lips, livid and purple, were apart, and seemed frozen to the white teeth. Kate's heart nearly stood still with terror, as she covered her face with her hands, and groaned:

“Oh, merciful Heaven, she is dead!”

For a while she sat stunned, stupefied by the sudden blow. Then, as the thought that life might not yet be totally extinct flashed across her mind, she wheeled over a couch, and, with an effort, raised the apparently dying lady upon it. Then she turned, and flew rather than ran up the stairs, until she reached the earl's room, and rapped loudly for admittance.

In a few moments the door opened, and the earl appeared.

“What is the matter?” he asked, staring at Kate's pallid face in astonishment.

“For Heaven's sake, uncle, hurry for a doctor, Aunt Madeline is dying; there is no time to be lost!”

“What!” gasped the earl, growing deadly white, and grasping Kate's arm so violently that she almost shrieked with pain.

“She is dying, I tell you,” repeated Kate, with passionate vehemence. “I found her lying in the lower hall, covered

with blood. I fear she has burst a blood-vessel, and will not survive. Oh ! hurry, hurry ! if you ever hurried in your life ! She may not be dead yet !”

Without waiting to hear her out, the earl sprang past, and was down stairs in a moment. One glance at the death-like face of his wife, and he was gone.

The servants were all buried in profound slumber ; there was no time to be lost in waking them up ; and in another instant he was mounted and away like the wind.

The rest of the family were by this time thoroughly aroused, and lights were now flashing in every direction ; the frightened servants gazed into each other's faces, pale with fear, as if seeking there an explanation of this new mystery.

Lady Danemore was removed to her chamber ; while Mrs. Nelson, who, on learning what had happened, fell into violent hysterics, and had to be carried to hers. All was dismay and confusion.

In a very short time the doctor arrived, and agreed with Kate in saying she had burst a blood-vessel, and that her case was serious—*very* serious indeed ; but still, with the aid of her youth, and the unceasing care of her attendants, she might recover.

With some difficulty she was restored to consciousness, and gazed wildly round on the numerous anxious faces by which she was surrounded. As memory returned, bringing before her the scenes of the night, she turned away her head with a faint moan.

The doctor having positively forbidden them to disturb her

with questions, all were left to their own conjectures as to how it had happened. What could Lady Danemore be doing in the lower hall, wrapped in a large cloak, at that hour of the morning? What could have happened to make her burst a blood-vessel? They asked themselves the question, and looked in each other's faces for an answer in vain.

The morning wore wearily on, and toward noon, feeling ill and feverish from excitement and want of sleep, Kate mounted her horse for a ride. Here a new mystery awaited her. The horses had been ridden by some person or persons unknown during the night! Could it have been by Lady Danemore? Kate was bewildered, and like one in a dream. She mounted her horse and rode off for the Pines. Here, too, all was gloom. Sir Hugh she found exceedingly ill, and no further news had been heard of Alice. Lord Arndale had departed, firmly resolved to find her, and induce her to return—and this hope still buoyed the old man up.

Kate's visit was soon over, and she once more turned her horse's head in the direction of Dirritole. As she slowly proceeded, the events of the past few days rose vividly before her. The singular disappearance of Alice; the unaccountable agitation of Lady Danemore at the sight of the old fortune-teller on the night of the ball; and her still more mysterious illness of the preceding night. How was all to be accounted for? So absorbed did Kate become in her train of thought, that she scarcely noticed that she had entered the forest path, until a little ragged urchin stood before her, and jerking his forelock politely, said :

“If you please, ma’am, here’s a letter a’ young ’ooman over there told me to bring up to the ’All and give it to nobody but you; but I seed you comin’ in here, and followed you. ’Ere’s the letter.”

As he spoke, he presented Kate with a small folded slip of paper.

Surprised at this singular address, she tore it open, and read:

“MISS KATE: If you want to hear of Miss Alice, come to the old oak near the spring, immediately. I am awaiting you there. Do not show this to a living soul, or all will be lost—

“JANIE FINN.”

Thunder-struck with amazement, and scarcely able to credit her senses, Kate read and re-read the note, which had been scrawled hurriedly with a pencil on a bit of brown paper. Turning at length to the boy, who still stood before her, she breathlessly demanded from whom he had received it.

“Why, I did tell you,” said the boy, looking rather astonished at Miss Sidney’s evident agitation, “I was a comin’ along, not thinkin’ of nothin’ in particular, when a young voman that looked as if she’d been trin’ to hide herself ’mong the trees, comes out, and she comes up to me, and sez she: “Does you know where Dirritole is?” and I sez, ‘Yes,’ and she axes me if as how I knows Miss Kate Sidney, and I sez ‘Yes;’ and she pulls out that there letter, and sez she, ‘Will you take this ere up to her, and don’t let nobody else see it?’ sez she, and I sez as how I will; and then she gave me three bobs, and tells me not to let nobody, ’cept

'tis you, see it; and I starts and meets you *slap*; and so that's all I know about it."

Kate listened with almost breathless interest to this lucid and very grammatical explanation, and, as the boy ceased, she turned away, and, without a word, darted into the forest, in the direction of the old oak. The young gentleman in the ragged garments looked after her with a strong expression of disgust.

"Well, if that ere ain't what edercated folks calls ingratitude, I'd like ter know what is," he said, after a pause, his feelings finding vent in words: "here I trots up to her, and gins her a letter, hopin' she'll trip me the needful when she reads it, and I'm blamed if I sees the first shiner of her money, and I a young gentleman what ain't got but three bobs in the world to bless myself with, which that nice young 'ooman over there guv me. But it's allurs the way with lords an' ladies, they haint got the first spark of perliteness—no more manners nor a passsl of pigs! Ugh!"

And evidently disgusted beyond measure at the ingratitude of the world, the ill-used young gentleman put his ragged pants in locomotion, and was soon out of sight among the trees.

Meantime, Kate had made her way rapidly toward the spot indicated in the singular note, almost tempted to believe herself laboring under some strange delusion. *News of Alice!* The thought gave wings to her feet, and panting and breathless with the haste she had made, she found herself at the old oak. She paused and looked around, not a soul was to be

seen, all was as profoundly still and deserted as the grave.

“Janie Finn!” called Kate, with a strange throbbing at the heart, as the thought that she had been deceived flashed across her mind.

“Hush, Miss Kate, not so loud,” said a voice from the trees behind her, and a moment after, Janie stood before her, pale with fatigue and apprehension.

“Oh, Janie Finn, for Heaven’s sake tell me of Alice!” exclaimed Kate, springing forward and seizing her hand. “Is she yet alive, or what has befallen her? Speak, girl, speak!”

“She is alive, but very ill,” said Janie, striving to restrain her sobs. “Oh, Miss Kate, only think where she is, and has been for the last week—in the old haunted Moor Manor.”

“Alice Desmond in the Manor!” ejaculated Kate in horror. “Who could have forced her there?”

“Your own uncle, Miss Kate—the noble Earl of Danemore!” replied Janie, bitterly.

“My uncle! Oh, Janie, impossible! You are deceived! He never could commit so base an act,” said Kate, horror-struck.

“I suppose not,” said Janie; “I suppose I wasn’t present and saw him, Miss Kate? I tell you he *did*.”

“Nonsense! it is absurd—ridiculous. He never would do it,” said Kate, vehemently. “Why, girl, Miss Desmond herself left a note saying she had departed of her own free will. You have been deceived.”

“I say what I mean and know!” said Janie, stoutly; “the

earl *did* take her away, and if you go to the Old Manor, you will see her there, and she can tell you herself if you won't believe me."

"But—but—it seems so strange, so improbable, so utterly monstrous, in fact!" said Kate, speaking like one in a dream. "Come, Janie, tell me all you know, from beginning to end. The whole affair seems wrapped in profound mystery."

"Very well; I must be quick, then; for if the earl should chance to miss me, I would be killed," said Janie, who thereupon related to Kate all that the reader already knows, from their starting that stormy night, until after the departure of the earl on the morning after the visit of the witch, concluding with:

"And so Miss Alice has been getting weaker and weaker ever since. She is not exactly sick, but she is fading and fading, like the waning moon. She neither eats nor speaks, but lies on the cushions from morning till night. Oh, Miss Kate, I am sure she will die! The earl told us, if we ever breathed to a living soul of her being there, he would pursue us with his vengeance all our lives; so we were afraid to come before. But when I saw Miss Alice lying there, dying by inches, I could not stand it longer. I just told John I would go, and let the earl do what he liked, because one might as well be killed at once, as to be dying with fear every night, as we are. John wanted to come, but I wouldn't let him; I knew he'd be sure to be found out—men are such stupid creatures; so I started about day-break, and meeting

Ragged Tommy, whom I knew I could trust, I gave him that note, and here you are. All I ask, is that you will tell Lord Arndale, and have Miss Alice rescued before she dies. As for me, I must hurry right back. Heaven help me if the earl discovers what I have done."

Kate had stood with her clear, searching eyes fixed on the faithful girl's face while she spoke, her own countenance undergoing a thousand changes of surprise, bewilderment, and terror. As Janie ceased, Kate's face was flushed, and her eyes were sparkling with indignation, while a firm look of decision gave a stern energy to her expression. But she now only looked up and said quietly :

"And what do you expect me to do?"

"To do!" repeated Janie, astonished. "Why to tell Lord Arndale, of course, and have Miss Alice brought home."

"I cannot do so," said Kate, in the same calm tone. "Lord Arndale is in London, and I do not know his address."

Janie wrung her hands in dismay.

"Oh, what is to be done, then?" she exclaimed in terror. "My poor, dear young lady! must she die all alone in that dreary place? Oh, Miss Kate! Miss Kate! she loves you, and would almost give her life for you, and now can you have the heart to leave her there to die alone?"

And Janie sobbed outright in her distress.

"No!" said Kate, with such stern fierceness that Janie drew back in alarm. "No! this very night I will go to the

old Moor Manor, and to-morrow Alice Desmond shall be free forever !”

“What !” exclaimed Janie, flushing with joy. “Oh, dear Miss Kate, you have made me so happy ! And you will come to-night ! Oh, I am sure the very sight of you will restore my dear young lady again ! I knew you wouldn’t desert her Miss Kate ?”

“You had better go, now,” said Kate, impatiently, without paying any attention to Janie’s transports. I know the way, so I shall not want any guide. Tell Miss Desmond I shall not fail to be there to-night.”

And Kate turned away toward the forest path, while Janie cautiously took the way that led to the moor.

For a while Kate went on rapidly, her cheeks flushed, her lips compressed, and her eyes fixed on the ground. At length her thoughts found vent, and she exclaimed bitterly :

“To think that he should be so base ! I always knew he was fiery, passionate, and cruel, as his injustice to poor Walter can testify ; but I never, *never* thought he could stoop to drag a defenseless girl from her home, lest she should stand in the way of his ambition. His motive for this is very evident ; he wishes to get Alice out of the way for a while, thinking he can prevail upon Harry to marry Lady Mary Orancourt. And to think that this man should be my uncle !” and Kate drew herself up haughtily, “but he will find that woman’s wit is a match for man’s cunning ! To-morrow Alice will be free !”

How little did Kate Sidney know what that eventful morrow would bring forth!

Upon reaching Dirritole, Kate's first inquiry was for the earl. Miss Dickett herself answered her summons, and entered the room in a towering state of indignation.

"Well, Miss Dickett, what new piece of iniquity has come to light now?" inquired Kate. "Has Master Charley done any new crime, this morning?"

Miss Dickett, overcome with indignation and haste, could not answer immediately, but stood panting for breath in the middle of the floor, with both hands pressed to her sides.

"Yes, hit's all verry fine—so it is!" exclaimed the ancient virgin, at length finding breath. "I never sees such a place as Dirritole's getting to be, of late. Hever since these newcomers come, there ain't one mite of peace or comfort in the 'ouse. A nasty hold nigger-wench, down hin the kitchen, which his has black has the hace of spades. Hup stairs, there's that wild little himp, Miss Maggie, allers a makin' of mischief; she's fifty thousand times worse than Master Charles—so she is. Hand then to 'ave hold witches, which is enough to make a body's blood run cold, a coming to parties, hand a stayin' jest as long has they likes, his habso-lutely hundurable, so hit his. Hand then to 'ave my lady up in 'er room sick, and a fallin' inter fits in the 'all, and Miss Marie off inter *hister-icks* in t'other, is mor'n I'm goin' to bear; hand I just means for to resign my situation—so I does!"

"Very good; you must speak to the earl about that. Where is he now?" said Kate, with quiet dignity.

“He’s hup in ’is study, a writin’ of somethin’,” replied the outraged housekeeper.

“Well, will you oblige me by telling him I wish to see him for a moment?” said Kate, rising.

With a muttered “hit’s all wery fine, so it is,” Miss Dickett made her visit, and presently reappeared, to announce that “the hearl would be very ’appy to see Miss Kate.”

Miss Sidney ran up-stairs, and tapped at the study-door, which was opened by the earl himself. He looked pale and anxious, but Kate was at no loss for what to ascribe it to now, nor did she set it down as anxiety on Lady Danemore’s account.

“Well, Miss Sidney, to what am I indebted for the honor of this visit?” said the earl, motioning her with his hand to a seat.

Kate noticed his courtesy by a slight bow, but remained standing.

“I have come here to tell you I am about to leave Dirritole for a short time,” said Kate, quietly.

“Ah, indeed!” said the earl, surprised and uneasy.

“Yes,” said Kate, in the same indifferent tone. “I received a note to-day, stating that my friend was sick, and wished to see me very much. I cannot refuse her request, but I considered it necessary to tell you before I went. That is all.

Kate stood with her head proudly erect, waiting his answer.

“Miss Sidney is her own mistress,” said the earl, with a

slight bow, "and of course can go where she pleases; but I think, with two patients now in the house——"

"Mrs. Nelson has her daughter and black servant to attend her," said Kate, with an impatient wave of her hand; "and as to Lady Danemore, she will be delighted to exchange my services for those of Bess L'Olise. Therefore my presence is more necessary elsewhere than here. Have I your permission to go, my lord?"

When asking permission of any one, Kate always spoke haughtily. Now she stood drawn up to her full height, proudly awaiting his reply.

"Oh, certainly; the trouble of coming to tell me was quite unnecessary. Go, by all means."

The earl rose as he spoke, to signify that their interview was over. Kate passed him with a slight bow and a cold "thank you, my lord," ran down stairs, and a few moments later was in the saddle and off.

Kate's determination was to pass the day at the house of a friend, and as soon as it grew dark to set off. Accordingly, with the first shades of evening, she started, and took the road toward the old Moor Manor.

The journey was a desolate and lonely one, even in broad daylight; but now, only lighted by the watery, fitful light of the moon, it was still worse. But Kate had never felt fear in her life, and now her only thought was of her friend—of poor Alice Desmond. Every moment seemed an age until she reached her, and with a feeling of unspeakable joy she at length beheld the gloomy front of the old Manor, rising like

a dark, evil thing in the midst of the gloomy moor. Not a glimpse of light came from it; all was dark, and still, and noiseless as the grave.

“Can it be deserted?” thought Kate, as she sprang from the saddle, and wrapped loudly with the end of her whip on the heavy oaken door.

A dull, rumbling echo, like distant thunder, echoed through the old building, making even Kate start. In a moment, however, she was reassured by hearing the voice of John call, in trembling tones:

“Who is there?”

“It is I, Miss Sidney,” said Kate, impatiently, “open the door, quick!”

“Miss Sidney, thank Heaven!” exclaimed John, fervently, as he drew back the bolts.

Kate sprang over the threshold, saying, as she did so: “See to my horse.” Then turning, she entered the great empty room, where Alice and Janie was. The sound of the loved voice of her friend seemed to inspire Alice with new life. She half arose, held out her arms toward Kate, and in another moment lay weak and powerless on her bosom.

“Oh! dear, dear Kate, I knew you would come to me,” said Alice, faintly, raising her head for a moment.”

“Oh, Alice! Oh, poor Alice!” said Kate, her tears falling fast on the pale, thin face of her friend.

“And my father, Kate—how is he?” said Alice after a long pause.

Kate hesitated a moment ; she could not speak falsely, and she shrank from adding to poor Alice's grief.

"He grieves for your loss, as you doubtless expect, Alice," said Kate, gently.

"And Harry—Lord Arndale?" said Alice, feebly.

"Poor Harry, he is half crazy, he is somewhere in London, but I will——"

Before Kate could finish the sentence, John rushed in, white with apprehension.

"Oh, Miss Kate, for Heaven's sake get out of sight. The earl is coming—he will be here in a few moments!"

A stifled shriek burst from Janie's lips, while Alice grew deadly pale.

"Let him come, then," said Kate, drawing herself up proudly, "I do not fear him. I will confront him with his victims."

"Oh, Miss Kate, for the love of Heaven, do not ruin us forever. The earl will murder us if he sees you. Oh, Miss Kate, fly! fly!"

"Fly, Kate, fly! for my sake, go!" exclaimed Alice, wild with fear.

Unable to understand their entreaties, Kate sprang to her feet, and turning to John, demanded:

"Where shall I go?"

"Here, here!" exclaimed John, turning to a door that seemed to lead to the interior of the building, and pulling with the energy of despair, it gave way, and Kate sprang through. The heavy door closed with a loud bang, and she was left alone in pitchy darkness.

How little did she dream of the long months that must pass ere she should look on the face of her friend again ; of the wonderful events that would come to light ere she should step out a free woman once more.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROVER CHIEF.

“When a woman *will* she *will*,
You may depend on’t,
And when she *won’t* she *won’t*;
And there’s an end on’t.”—*Anon.*

For a few moments profound stillness reigned throughout the old Moor Manor. Kate stood in the deep darkness, listening attentively, but no sound broke the profound stillness. Suddenly the tramp of a heavy footstep broke upon her ear, and a moment after, she heard the voice of the earl as he addressed Alice :

“Good evening, Miss Desmond. I trust I see you better this evening,”

“I thank you, my lord, I feel very weak ; but otherwise well,” answered Alice, faint with apprehension.

“Have you had any intruders since?” he demanded, fixing his eyes sharply on the face of Alice.

Miss Desmond hesitated ; but Janie took upon herself to answer.

“No, we have had no *intruders* (that’s true, anyway,” thought Janie,) “everybody thinks the old place is deserted, when they see no light.”

“I did not ask you—please hold your tongue until you are

spoken to," said the earl harshly; then turning to Alice, he added, in a softer tone: "I trust I shall be able to take you from this dreary place very soon; in the meantime, I will do everything I can to make you comfortable. Put in more wood, John, I intend to stay all night."

"He intends to stay all night, does he," thought Kate; "a pleasant prospect for me, if I have to stay in this cold, dark place until morning. I wonder what sort of a place I have got into? As I have nothing else to do, I will go on an exploring expedition, and see."

As we have before remarked, Kate Sidney was descended from a race of warriors; and the heroic blood of her forefathers had descended to her unadulterated. Fear was a sensation she never felt; and so she hesitated not a moment in an act that might make many who pass for brave, shrink; for it requires considerable moral, as well as physical courage to explore a deserted old house alone, after night—one, too, bearing so terrible a reputation as did the old Moor Manor.

Kate turned for the purpose of putting her resolution into practice, and endeavored to peer through the thick darkness. Gradually her eyes grew more accustomed to the gloom, and she saw that she was in a sort of a long hall, that seemed to lead to the interior.

Feeling her way with her hands along the wall, she approached a door at the end of the hall, which she strove to open. This, with some difficulty, she succeeded in doing; and entering, she found herself in a high, lofty room, exactly similar to the one which she had left.

Proceedingly cautiously, step by step—for all was still profoundly dark—Kate discovered, to her surprise, a staircase at the farther end, that seemed to lead down to rooms below. Here, for the first time, she hesitated a moment; but curiosity overpowering every other feeling, she slowly and carefully began to descend.

The stairs seemed to her interminable; and at length, with a feeling of thanksgiving, she found herself at the bottom, and in another long, gloomy hall.

Again she hesitated, and was half inclined to turn back; but ashamed to yield to the strange feeling of dread that was creeping over her, she essayed to recover her self-possession, and exclaimed, half aloud:

“What nonsense it is to be afraid! I have gone so far without danger, and now I will not turn back until I find out all about this queer old place. Perhaps I shall never have the chance again—so I will see where this hall leads to!”

Suiting the action to the word, Kate started forward, when a sudden noise behind her made her start, and turn round in alarm. Nothing was to be seen, however; and quieting her fears with the thought that “’twas only the wind,” she cautiously advanced.

Again she heard the noise behind her; this time she could not be mistaken; it sounded like a footstep. Wild with terror, and scarcely knowing what she did, Kate fled like lightning down the long hall, when her foot caught in a large ring, fastened in the floor, and with a piercing shriek, she fell headlong to the ground.

Before she could rise, two hands, icy-cold, were placed over her mouth ; while a long, shrill, peculiar whistle sounded behind her, waking a thousand dismal echoes through the dreary rooms.

Stupefied with horror, Kate was unable to either move, or utter the least sound ; while, as the echoes died away, all became again profoundly still, the two icy-cold hands still holding her fast.

Gradually part of the floor beside her seemed moving away, and Kate soon saw that she had tripped over the ring of a trap-door. The door was raised from below ; and still immovable with terror, she beheld a man standing on the steps, holding a lantern in his hand, which he raised aloft to penetrate the darkness.

Kate thought she had never beheld so brutal a looking face—half buried in huge, black, bushy whiskers ; and a deadly feeling of sickness came over her as she thought into what hands she might fall. She lifted her head and gazed at her captor, who was younger and not so ferocious looking as the other ; but there was an evil light in his eyes, and a fierce, sinister expression in his countenance, that made her shrink from him with a shudder of loathing.

Her presentiment of danger was fulfilled. The old Moor Manor was then inhabited—into whose hands had she fallen !—did her uncle know these fierce-looking men were here ?

With lightning-like rapidity these thoughts flashed through Kate's mind, and with these came back the lofty fortitude that for a moment had deserted her. . Now she was certain

she had fallen into the hands of villains, her fearless nature was again calm. She would have risen, but her captor held her fast.

“Hello, Simon! who’s this?” said the man on the stairs, fixing his evil eyes on Kate.

“A prisoner I’ve captured. Come, get out o’ that, and let us down. Here, my pretty wench, will you walk, or shall we carry you down stairs?” said the gruff voice of her captor.

“I will walk!” said Kate, shrinking from his outstretched hand with a shudder of disgust.

“All right; that’ll save trouble. I like to see a woman have spunk. Down with you!” said the man, with an insolent leer, that made Kate’s eye flash fiercely, though she did not reply.

Knowing that resistance would be madness, and that it was in vain to call for help, Kate compressed her lips firmly, and turned to descend the stairs. Her captor followed her, drawing the trap-door after him, while the other still preceded them with the light. They then passed through several gloomy, vaulted rooms, from the heavy, earthy smell of which Kate concluded she was underground. The wet, slimy, green walls were dripping with moisture—while horrible vermin, with which old houses are infested, went crawling over the floor in all directions, scared away by the light.

Kate shuddered with horror, as she gazed around; and shrieked aloud, as a bat—that evil bird of night—flew by, flapping its wings in her face.

“Curse the bats!” said the man, called Simon, in a tone

so fierce that Kate trembled and hurried on faster after her guide.

At length the vaulted passages were left behind, they again passed down a few steps, and entered what might once have been a dungeon, when the noise and uproar of a carousal fell upon the ears of the terrified Kate. The guide advanced, and opening a door at the farther end, a blaze of light for a moment nearly blinded her—being so long accustomed to darkness—while the sounds of jingling glasses, oaths, songs, and bursts of hoarse laughter, mingled together in wild uproar.

Kate drew back sick with horror, as she beheld the fearful den she had entered; but the man Simon gave her little time to hesitate. Seizing her roughly by the arm, he forced her forward until she entered the room where the carousal was at its height. As the eyes of the men fell on her, every voice was hushed in surprise; and all turned to Simon, as if seeking an explanation.

Kate raised her head, and ventured to glance around. The room was like all the others in the old manor—high and lofty—with stone walls, floor, and ceiling. A huge fire glowed and roared in an enormous fire-place, and rendered everything around as clear as at noonday. Rough slab benches were ranged around the walls, and formed its only article of furniture. A long table, extending from one end of the room to the other, stood in the middle of the floor, covered with bottles, glasses, jars, and steaming pitchers of hot water. Around this was seated nearly thirty men—a fierce, dark,

blood-thirsty-looking crew—from whose nautical air Kate at once knew them to be sailors. All were armed with pistols and daggers stuck in their belts ; and oh ! the feeling of sickening terror that made Kate stagger against the wall as the dreadful conviction that she had fallen into a den of pirates or smugglers forced itself on her mind. At the head of the board stood an elevated seat, empty now, but which seemed evidently designed for some one of higher rank than the others. The man Simon cast his eyes towards this, then turning to the others, demanded :

“ Where’s the captain ? ”

“ Syra came for him a few moments ago,” answered a young man, somewhat less savage-looking than his companions. “ Shall I go after him ? ”

“ No, you needn’t mind ; hand me the jar—I’m dying o’ thirst. Here’s to your good health, my dear,” said the man, with another insolent leer towards his prisoner.

Kate’s cheek crimsoned, and her eyes flashed fiercely as she drew herself up and stood looking with lofty scorn on the savage-looking revellers.

“ By George, she’s a rum ’un ! ” remarked one of the men, with a coarse laugh. “ Say, my dear, won’t you taste this ! ” and he held out toward her a brimming goblet of brandy.

“ Where did you get her, Simon ? ” inquired half a dozen voices at once.

“ Here, Bill, the jug’s empty—fill it again ! ” said Simon, without paying any attention to his interrogators, and handing the empty jug across the table. “ Go on with your sing-

ing, Jack," he added, turning to another; "I'll tell you all about it when the captain comes."

"Sing us our own song, Jack!" called half a dozen voices together. "Hurrah for the pirate's song!"

The man addressed as Jack, a fierce, powerful-looking brigand, drained a glass of brandy; then throwing himself back in his chair, he sang, in a powerful voice:

THE PIRATE'S SONG.

"To the mast nail our flag—it is dark as the grave,
Or the death which it bears while it sweeps o'er the wave—
Let our deck clear for action—our guns be prepared;
Be the boarding-axe sharpened, the cimeter bared;
Set the canisters ready; and then bring to me,
For the last of my duties, the powder-room key.
It shall never be lowered—the black flag we bear;
If the sea be denied us, we sweep through the air.

"Unshared we have left our last victory's prey—
It is mine to divide it, and yours to obey.
Here are shawls that might suit a sultana's white neck,
And pearls that are fair as the arms they will deck;
There are flasks which—unseal them the air will disclose
Diametta's fair summers—the home of the rose.
I claim not a portion; I ask but as mine—
'Tis to drink, to our victory, one cup of red wine.

"Some fight—'tis for riches: some fight—'tis for fame;
The first I despise, and the last is a name.
I fight—'tis for vengeance! I love to see flow,
At the stroke of my saber, the life of my foe.
I strike for the memory of long vanished years—
I only shed blood where another sheds tears.
I come as the lightning comes red from above,
O'er the race that I loathe, to the battle I love."

“Hurrah! hurrah for the pirate’s song! Hurrah for the battle we love!” shouted every one present, as wild with excitement and brandy, they arose to their feet and waved their glasses above their heads.

“What now, my men? You seem more than usually boisterous this evening,” called a clear, commanding voice at this moment, as a young man suddenly made his appearance among them, and took the vacant seat at the head of the table.

“Hurrah for Captain Raymond! Long live our rover chief!” shouted the men, as with one voice, maddened by excitement.

“Thank you, my lads, ‘Free as air!’ shall ever be our motto—the broad ocean our home—our good swords our law; with no master but strong wine, and no mistress but our gallant bark!” answered the young rover chief, with a kindling eye.

There was something in his tone that bespoke him different from the rest—a certain air of refinement and cultivation, mingled with a lofty consciousness of command and superiority. Kate, whom the pirates seemed to have almost forgotten, lifted her head and surveyed him earnestly.

In person, he was tall, slight, and perfectly symmetrical—with an air of easy grace and dignity that stamped him far above his calling. His countenance, bronzed slightly by exposure to wind and sun, was strikingly handsome; and when he smiled, there was a winning sweetness in his look that impressed Kate deeply. His forehead—high, broad, and

very white—showed how fair his natural complexion was; while his fair hair clustered in short, crisp curls around it. But to Kate, the chief attraction was his eyes—large and “darkly, beautifully blue”—that ever wandered around with a keen, quick, restless glance. His air of quiet superiority showed how perfect his command over his men was, together with the innate consciousness of being their superior. Kate did not wonder how he—the youngest, apparently, of that band—could have become its commander; it was merely the triumph of *mind* over *matter*—the triumph of education and refinement over their animal natures.

Kate thought, as she gazed, she had never beheld a more perfect specimen of manly beauty. Handsome, indeed, he was, with “man’s best beauty;” but could one who looked to be so perfect a gentleman—one of Nature’s own princes—be the dreadful pirate-chieftain of whom she had heard such fearful stories?—whom she had heard represented as a demon in human form? Could this be the daring, fearless rover-chief, Captain Raymond?

Suddenly his eye fell upon Kate who seemed in a fair way of being forgotten by the whole party, and he arose to his feet, with a look of utter amazement. His men followed the direction of his eye, and unanimously exclaimed:

“Come, Simon, you’ve to tell us yet how you got the girl. Quick—out with it, man!”

“How came this woman here?” demanded the young captain, turning his eyes from one to the other, in complete astonishment.

“Simon Crow brought her here. Tell us how you got her, Simon!” chorused several of the party.

Captain Raymond turned his eyes inquiringly on Simon.

“Well, you see, captain,” began the man. “I was, as usual going round up aloft, watching our new lodgers, you know, when I hears, all of a sudden, a great buzz; and a minute after, the door was hauled open, and this wench here was launched clean into the room where I was. I kept dark, thinking she’d stay quietly where she was; but, instead of that, she starts on a voyage—to see where she’d come out, I suppose. I followed her as softly as possible; but at last she heard me, and hoisting all sail, she scud before the wind; but her foot caught on the trap-door, and she came down on her beam-ends. I tackled on to her, and whistled for Jack, and we brought her here; so that’s all about it.”

During Simon’s explanation, the pirate chief had kept his eyes fixed on Kate. Then he advanced toward her, and said, in the courteous tone of a gentleman:

“I sincerely regret this unlucky adventure, madam, as you have probably been greatly alarmed. I must apologize for any rudeness that may have been offered to you by any of my men. They are little used to the society of ladies.”

“So I perceive,” said Kate, scornfully; “and the best way for you to atone for their insolence is, to give me my liberty immediately.”

“Don’t captain! She will turn informer!” shouted every one present, simultaneously.

“Silence!” said the pirate captain, with a sudden flash of

his blue eye, and in a tone that made the boldest quail. Every voice was instantaneously hushed ; and, as if satisfied at this proof of his power, he turned once more to Kate, and said, with grave courtesy :

“ I am sorry it is not in my power to comply with your request. Neither I nor my men would feel safe in this our retreat, afterward. In short, madam, it is my painful duty to announce to you that you must remain with us—at least until such time as this place will be deserted by us.”

“ You have no right to make me your prisoner,” said Kate, indignantly, “ and I demand my freedom. A brave set of men you must be, to lay in wait to entrap defenseless women. It is an action worthy a band of outlaws.”

A subdued but fierce murmur ran round the circle at Kate's daring words, but no one dared express their anger aloud.

There was a sudden gleam in the young captain's eyes, but he repressed all signs of anger, and said, quietly :

“ Allow me to set you right, madam. *We* did not entrap you ; you threw yourself in our power. And,” (here he lowered his voice), “ let me beg you to use more respectful language when speaking of us. There is a spirit in my men that your words will be apt to arouse, and which I may find it difficult to subdue.”

Kate felt she had been imprudent ; but she deigned him no reply, and stood as haughtily erect before them as though she had been their queen.

“ Every comfort in our power will be yours while you are

with us," continued the young captain; "and now, may I ask by what name we are to address our fair prisoner?"

"I am called Kate Sidney, and I come of a family that are not to be insulted thus, with impunity. Perhaps they will one day make you repent this!" said Kate, proudly.

Another fierce growl of rage, at this insult to their chief, ran around the table. Every eye was directed toward the fearless girl, who stood proudly erect, looking down haughtily and scornfully on those by whom she was surrounded, and from her to the young chief, who had suddenly grown very pale. This, the only sign of his emotion, passed in a moment, and he said, calmly:

"I have heard of Miss Sidney's family, and I am convinced from what I have heard of herself, that she will not break a promise, if once given. Promise me, then, never to breathe a word of what you have heard and seen here to-night, and you shall the next moment go forth, free as the winds of heaven."

A fierce murmur of disapprobation, louder than before, came from the pirates, at this. Captain Raymond turned suddenly round, and fixed his eyes upon them, with a look which, in spite of themselves, compelled obedience; and they sulkily relapsed into silence. A slight smile, at this evidence of his power, flitted for a moment across his handsome face, and turning to Kate, he said, with calm courtesy:

"I await your answer, Miss Sidney. Will you promise?"

"No!" said Kate, scornfully; "not to save myself from death—much less imprisonment—would I league myself with

a band of outlawed rovers. The very moment I am free, that same moment will I give information of your hiding-place, that you may be dealt with as you deserve by the laws you have so long violated. I will consider myself doing an act of justice to the world, to rid it of a band of robbers and murderers !”

“ Death to the Jezebel !” shouted the pirates, rising to their feet fiercely, and seizing their swords.

“ Silence !” commanded the rover chief, sternly, drawing a pistol from his belt ; “ the first man who again presumes to speak, I will shoot down like a dog !”

There was a look of fierce resolution on his face that again made them quail—perhaps they had seen the threat kept before. All slunk silently back to their seats, like whipped curs.

“ Girl !” he said, turning sternly to Kate, “ you seem determined to provoke your death. Once more I ask you, will you promise what I desire, and go forth free ?”

“ Once again.” replied Kate, with grim resolution, “ I answer you—*no* !”

“ Can *nothing* induce you to consent ? Remember, you may be obliged to stay with us for years,” said Captain Raymond.

Kate thought of Alicc, and turned pale ; but a resolution once taken by her no power on earth could alter. She therefore looked up steadily in his handsome face, and answered firmly :

“ It is all useless, sir—I will *never* consent ; and so soon

as I am free, just so soon will I give information against you. I can promise *nothing* to such as you!"

She glanced scornfully around on the long array of dark, scowling faces, that looked the rage they dare not speak.

"Then you must stay with us," said the captain, slowly—almost sorrowfully. "I am sorry to be obliged to retain you a prisoner; but you compel me to do so. For the last time, I ask you again, will you not change your mind?"

An angry flash of her eye, and an impatient wave of her hand, was Kate's sole answer.

"Be it so, then," he said, calmly, "follow me."

Kate moved after him to the farther end of the apartment. Here he touched a spring, and a concealed door flew open. He passed through. Kate followed, and the door closed noiselessly between them and the pirate crew.

CHAPTER XIII.

SYRA.

“A maid whom there are none to praise,
And very few to love.”

* * * * *

“A violet by a mossy stone,
Half hidden from the eye,
Fair as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky.”—*Wordsworth.*

For a few moments Kate stood gazing around her, scarcely able to credit her senses. The scene that here met her eye was so completely different from that she had just left, that it was no wonder she was completely bewildered. Instead of the rough stone floor she had left, she now stood on a rich Turkey carpet; instead of the rude benches she beheld luxurious sofas and ottomans; instead of the damp, bare walls, this room was hung with elegant pictures, while exquisitely beautiful statues were grouped around in every direction. A large and handsome lamp, suspended from the ceiling, lighted up this elegant apartment. A marble-topped center-table stood in the middle of the floor, covered with books, and a mimic fountain of perfumed water stood in another corner, filling the room with fragrance. Cages filled with bright, foreign birds, whose gorgeous plumage flashed in

the light, hung around in various directions. A little staircase of four or five steps was at the end of the apartment, evidently leading to another room, which was concealed from view by two heavy curtains of green velvet. Full-length mirrors were ranged all around, reflecting the room and its inmates in every direction, and bewildering any one, on suddenly entering, by seeing the countless apartments by which they were surrounded.

Kate was absolutely overwhelmed with surprise, and stood gazing, first around her, and then turning to the young captain, half in doubt whether he were not an enchanter, who had suddenly decorated the apartment by his magic skill. He noticed her bewildered look, and a half-smile broke over his handsome face, as he rang a musical little silver bell that stood on the table.

The summons was answered by a young girl so beautiful, that Kate stood gazing upon her as one might look on some radiant vision from another world. And yet her beauty was not spiritual, not such as we conceive angels to be. It was a beauty wholly and entirely of this world—of middle height, with an exquisitely proportioned figure, dark, oval face, large, melting, languishing, liquid, jet-black eyes; hair of that rare glossy black so seldom seen, but so very beautiful, hung in soft, wavy tresses, like raveled silk, around her low, polished forehead. The rich flush that gives so much beauty to the brunette glowed on cheek and lip, and every movement was instinct with grace. And yet the large, dark, oriental eyes had in them a look of sleepy wickedness that made Kate draw

back ; it was as if gazing on a beautiful serpent—she had forgotten it could sting. The hot blood of the fiery South ran in those veins, it was easy to see.

The young girl came gliding forward, bowed low, then crossing her arms on her bosom, stood with her eyes fixed on the floor, the long, silken, black lashes resting on her crimson cheeks like dark fringe, waiting until he should speak.

“Syra,” said the young captain, “you will consider this young lady your mistress while she remains here. Let her want for nothing, and remember to treat her with the utmost respect. I will surrender my apartment to her while she remains.”

“Captain Raymond shall be obeyed,” answered the young girl, quietly, without looking up.

“Very good. Adieu for the present, Miss Sidney.”

He bowed, and turned away. Syra lifted her dark eyes, and stood watching him until he vanished through the secret door. Then, turning to Kate, she said, in the low, musical voice in which she spoke :

“Perhaps you would like to retire, my mistress. If so, I will show you to your room.”

“If you please,” said Kate, rising to follow her, and wondering at the little surprise she manifested at her sudden appearance.

Syra led the way toward the short stair-case, drew aside one of the rich curtains, saying, as she did so :

“This was Captain Raymond’s chamber ; but he has re-

signed it to you. If you wish for anything during the night, please to ring.

Kate, nodded, and entered the chamber. It was furnished almost similarly to the one she had left, save that one corner was occupied by a bed, hung around with heavy, dark curtains.

Kate threw herself on a couch, and, covering her face with her hands, gave way to the bitter thoughts that came surging through her mind. Now, for the first time, the full loneliness of her situation broke upon her mind. Away, underground, where she could never possibly be discovered, without the slightest chance of escape, her friends all ignorant of her fate, in the hands of a band of lawless pirates, poor Kate's fate seemed dark enough. And then Alice—poor, uncomplaining, suffering Alice—she, too, must remain in the power of the earl, without the chance of being rescued; for it was almost certain the earl would hear of her visit, and then take measures to see that it was not repeated. And so Alice would be left alone, if the servants were taken from her, which Kate felt certain would be the case as soon as what they had done was discovered. Overcome by her own bitter thoughts, Kate's feelings found vent in a passionate flood of tears.

Exhausted at length, Kate sat up, and, taking one of the books from the table, strove to read, in order to divert her thoughts. It was an old volume of ballads—quaint, but sweet. As she opened it, her eye fell upon a page marked in pencil, most probably by the hand of the young captain himself. Kate read :

“ Well, well, I say no more,
Let dead care for dead;
Yet woe is me! Therefore
I must attempt to lead
One other kynde of life
Than hitherto I have;
Or else this pain and strife
Will bring me to my grave.”

And underneath was written :

“ The trees do spring, yet are not seen to growe,
And shadows move, although they seem to stay,
In winter's woe is buried summer's bliss,
And love loves most, when love most secret is.”

Kate sighed, and, closing the book, leaned her head upon her hand, and fell to speculating as to what could have reduced one so young, so handsome, so evidently accomplished, to become the leader of a gang of outlaws. That at some period of his life he had been a gentleman, she felt certain—an indescribable something in his air and manner convinced her of it. Something, too, she could not account for, drew her forcibly to him, a sort of hazy idea that she had seen him somewhere before, filled her mind—his face seemed familiar like the faces one sees in dreams; but nothing seemed definite, nothing tangible. And this dark, beautiful girl—who could she be? his sister perhaps. But a moment's thought convinced her that was simply impossible, besides the dissimilarity of form and feature, his manner of addressing her was more that of a master addressing a servant, than a brother to a sister.

Tired at last of speculating, without being able to come to any conclusion, Kate threw herself upon the bed, and in a few moments was buried in profound slumber, from which she did not wake until late the following morning.

A noise by her bedside awoke her, and springing up, she beheld an old, jet-black negress, standing beside her, holding a waiter with coffee and toast. Kate was for a moment startled by the sight, but a second glance at the old woman's good-humored ebony countenance reassured her.

"Law, misses! I'se sorry fur ter 'sturb yer, child," said the old woman, drawing a little table near the bedside, and placing the waiter on it; "but Marse Cappen, he wouldn't guv me no peace till I'd fetch yer some brekfas. Eat away now, honey, you won't git anything to beat dat ar coffee."

"Who are you;" said Kate, quietly.

"Lor', child, I's only old Aunt Moll—I isn't nobody of no kinsquince—'spect yer tought I was missis here—he, he, he!" and Aunt Moll indulged in a gleeful chuckle.

"Who is that handsome young girl I saw here last night? Is she your mistress?" inquired Kate.

"My missis! *she!* O Lor'! He, he, he!" and evidently thinking the question a good joke, Aunt Moll laughed till the tears ran down her fat, shiny black cheeks. "Why, laws, misses, dat ar was only Syra, my granddarter, dat's all. *She* my misses! O Lor'! He, he, he!"

"Your granddaughter!" echoed Kate, in surprise. "Is she then only a servant?"

"'Deed she is—dat's all! She's powerful handsom' dough,

is Syra. Lor', misses, we's bin here ebber so long wid young massa Cappen. 'Deed we is, chile; powerful lonesum 'tis here, 'cept when dem ar rip, stavin, tarrifyin, brandy-drinkin' sailors is here. I'd jest 'sign my sitivation long ago, if it wa'n't for young Massa Cappen; for dem ar screechin', roarin' set's 'nuff to make any 'spectable, age-ble old wooman like I is, go right off and heave demselves away; but young Massa Cappen, he allers says, 'Moll, you poor ole debbil, yer know we can't do widout yer,' so I jes' stays fur to please him: but if dem ar tarrifyin ole high-binders stays here, I'll jes' 'sign my sitivation—dar!"

Kate smiled, in spite of herself, at the old woman's quaint language, which was almost new to her; and her curiosity being aroused to learn further, she inquired:

"And may I ask, my good aunty, how you came here first, since I suppose you have not been always with the pirates?"

"O Lor'!" said Aunt Moll sitting down, and wiping the perspiration off her face; "we done come from a long piece away—from Cuba, if you ever hearn tell of sich a place."

Kate having signified that she possessed that much geographical knowledge, Aunt Molly continued:

"We b'longed to an ole planter, me and Syra. You see, misses, Syra's mother was my darter, an' she wer' a mullatter, powerful handsom', too, she war jes' like Syra. Well, a few years, when Syra was 'bout fourteen, ole massa died, and his misses, she wanted to sell off all de sarvints, an' de old place. Well, dey put me an' Syra up at auction with the rest, an' I hopin' dey'd sell us bof togedder. But dey didn't

One ole feller got her, an' a sugar planter bought me. Oh, misses, I tought I'd die den; I hadn't nobody in de worl' to love only Syra, an' when I seed them takin' her off, I jes' caught hold of her, an' screeched *good*, I tell yer. Well, misses, a nice young gentl'en came up an' axed what was de matter; an' when dey tole him, he jes' said he'd pay whatever dey liked if dey'd sell us. So dey did, and young Massa Cappen, he brought us here, taught Syra how to read, and we's been here ebber sence.

"And do you not find it very dull here?" said Kate, who had listened with interest to the old woman's story.

"Lor yes, misses, 'tis rather lonesome," said Aunt Moll, with her pleasant laugh, "but law sakes we's used to it now—me and Syra is. I's a goin' now, but ef you wants anything, jes ring, and Syra'll come. Marse Cappen tole her to 'tend you."

So saying, Aunt Moll quitted the room, leaving Kate to finish her breakfast.

* Toward noon, as Kate sat on a lounge in the outer apartment, reading a book of old German legends, Syra entered to perform some domestic duty. Kate glanced at her with admiration, thinking in her own mind what a pity one so peerlessly beautiful should be hidden away from sight in the vaulted chambers of the old Moor Manor.

"I wonder if she is really happy here?" thought Kate. "I will ask her."

And, thereupon turning to Syra, she said:

"Are you in a great hurry, Syra?"

"No, misses," answered the quadroon, pausing in her work.

"Then come here—I want to talk to you," said Kate, pointing to a seat. "Tell me, Syra, do you like to stay here?"

"Yes misses," answered the quadroon, quietly.

"And why? Do you not find it very dull?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes, when Captain Raymond is away. But then I have all his books, and nothing to do but read, and feed the birds, and think of the beautiful things he will bring me when he comes back; and when he is here I am so happy! I never feel lonesome then."

"Do you love him so much then?" said Kate, a new light breaking in on her mind.

"Oh, yes!"

The quadroon's dark face flushed, and her large Syrian eyes kindled with the enthusiasm with which she spoke.

"And why?" said Kate, gently; "why do you love him so much.

"I don't know," replied Syra, thoughtfully. "I have never thought about it. Perhaps I love him because he is so handsome, and so brave, and so kind to me. Oh, I do love him more than I can tell—don't you?"

Kate smiled, and then sighed.

"No, I don't love him, and I think you had better not either, Syra. Poor child, he doesn't care for you."

"But he will by-and-by. Oh, I know he will—he *must*!" exclaimed Syra, vehemently. "I would die for him! If

my life could save his, I would give it. And I know he will love me yet!"

Before Kate could reply there came a knock at the door. A sudden flush of joy lighted up Syra's beautiful face as she sprang forward and opened it, and the young captain entered.

Noticing Syra with that peculiar smile that gave such a look of winning sweetness to his handsome face, he advanced and saluted Kate with easy grace, and, after making a few inquiries concerning her health, and how she had rested, he said with a smile:

"I am about to relieve you of my presence for a while, Miss Sidney. Business calls me to Ireland, and during my absence, my men, with the exception of two or three who will remain here, will go on another expedition. We will probably return in a few weeks, but even this short absence will doubtless afford you pleasure. I start this evening, so I will have no other opportunity of seeing you, and now must bid you farewell. Good-by, Syra. See that Miss Sidney wants for nothing during my absence."

He was gone before either could reply, and then Syra, casting herself on a sofa, buried her face in her hands and sobbed convulsively.

"Syra, my dear, what is the matter?—what is it, child?" said Kate, alarmed.

"Oh, he's gone, he's gone! Captain Raymond's gone," sobbed Syra.

"Well, what of that? He will return in a few weeks, he says," said Kate, soothingly.

“Oh, yes, I know!” wailed Syra; “but he is exposed to so many dangers when he is away. Oh, Miss Sidney, once when they brought him here severely wounded, I thought I should have died. I nursed him until he was well again; but every time he leaves here he is so thoughtless, he rushes into danger. Oh, Miss Sidney, if he dies, I shall die, too; and if he is taken, he will be hung.”

“And serve him right, too,” thought Kate; but not wishing to add to poor Syra’s grief, she endeavored to console her as well as she was able. All her efforts were, however, vain, and the pale face and sad eyes of the quadroon, for the remainder of the day, betokened how deeply she mourned his absence of the young rover chief.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARLEY IN DUBLIN.

“’Tis a look of his eye,
And a way he can sigh,
Makes Paddy a darling wherever he goes ;
With a sugary brogue,
Ye’d hear the rogue
Cheat the girls before their nose.”—*Song*

LEAVING the old Manor Moor and its prisoners, Dirritole, and our English friends behind us, with one bound you and I, dear reader, are in Dublin—in the gay metropolis of Ireland.

In an untidy-looking apartment, littered with newspapers, books, cigar-stumps, empty bottles, and so on *ad infinitum*, and stretched in his usual way—at full length—on a lounge, lies our old friend Charley Sidney. A cigar is in his mouth, and he seems deeply absorbed in watching the curling smoke as it winds upward. He seems rather paler than usual—a circumstance which may be accounted for by stating that he has passed the previous night at a military ball, and having drank rather too much wine, is to-day troubled with a pretty severe headache. Somehow of late Charley’s thoughts have a way of wandering across the channel to a certain bright-eyed little cousin of his ; and he is thinking now what Mag-

gie would say could she know how desperately he had flirted all night with a roguish-eyed Irish heiress.

So absorbed did he become in his reflections, that he heard not the loud knocking that had been kept up at his door for some time ; and it was only when the applicant for admission, evidently exasperated by his delay, gave a thundering peal that threatened to bring down the door, that it awoke him from his reverie.

“ Come in ! ” shouted Charley.

The door opened, and Sir Harry Dudley, the aid-de-camp, who had been ordered to Ireland some time previously, entered.

“ Confound you ! ” was his not over-polite salute on entering. “ I thought you were asleep, and here you are looking as cool as an ice-cream, after having kept me hammering away at the door these twenty minutes or so. Couldn’t you let a fellow in ? ”

I didn’t hear you,” muttered Charley, apologetically, “ sit down ! ” and Mr. Sidney shoved a chair toward him with his foot.

“ How do you feel after last night’s spree ? ” inquired the baronet, taking a seat.

“ Miserably, thank you ; I’ve been sewed up here with a confounded headache ever since ! ” answered Charley.

“ Ah ! my dear fellow, you’re new at this sort of business yet. Wait till our mess have had you in hand for a while, we’ll make a capital fellow of you. I say, Charley, it’s a shame to keep such a strapping fellow as you are in that old

hole, Trinity College. Why don't you cut the whole affair, and become one of us?"

"Can't do it, my dear fellow—haven't the needful!" said Charley, with a sigh.

"What a thing it is to want money in this world!" said Sir Harry, philosophically, "such a fellow as you are now, would be a trump, if you only had the chink. I'm confoundedly short myself, and never write to the governor for a supply without getting a lecture as long as my arm in return. I wish some heiress would have me, I'd marry her if she were as ugly as a Hottentot, if she only had the cash."

And the young officer threw himself back in his chair, unbuttoned his coat, stuck both long legs before the fire, and sighed profoundly.

Charley felt himself called upon to offer consolation to his afflicted friend; but not knowing what to say, remarked, after a pause:

"I expected Fitzgerald here this morning; it's a wonder he's not here before now."

"Here he is!" exclaimed Sir Harry, as a loud rap came to the door.

"That's Maurice's rap; I'd know it among a thousand!" muttered Charley; then raising his voice, he called: "Come in!"

"In answer to this summons, a tall, dashing, handsome fellow, dressed in the uniform of a dragoon entered, and threw himself into a chair with very little ceremony.

"Well, Fitzgerald, what's the news this morning?" inquired Charley.

“Faith, nothing, except that Mr. Magee’s coming up here after dinner to ask your intentions regarding his niece!” answered the new comer.

“Nonsense, Maurice.”

“No nonsense about it, man. Didn’t you dance a jig with her last night, and ask her if she liked Englishmen?”

“Well, and what if I did?” said Charley.

“Upon my conscience, it’s easy you take it,” replied the dragoon. “Maybe when old Magee comes up here, with a horsewhip in one hand and a parson in the other, you’ll be asking: ‘What then?’ Faith, I’d like to see you.”

“Confound your impertinence!” exclaimed Charley. “What the duse do you mean?”

“Why, simply that you’ve talked the prettiest girl in Dublin into a most deplorable attachment for you!” said Fitzgerald. “Hand me that cigar-case, Charley. Ah! my boy, good-looking fellows like you ought to be careful how they flirt with pretty girls. Old Magee’ll raise the mischief if you don’t marry his niece!”

“Let him go to Jericho!” muttered Charley, indignantly.

“A queer set you Irish are!” remarked Sir Harry Dudley, “fighting, drinking, and love-making, seems to be your sole occupation. Knock a man down one minute, and make up friends with him the next in a *shebeen*, smashing skulls with a cudgel in a fair now, and when you see him again, dancing a jig with some red-haired beauty. The whole country and its inhabitants are to me a perfect enigma.”

"And after all," said Fitzgerald, "there's no other place in the world like it. I've been freezing in Canada and roasting in India, and I've never met a land I liked so well as the 'Gem of the Sea.'"

"There *is* some remarkably fine scenery in Galway!" said Sir Harry. "I remember being particularly struck with the romantic beauty of Glendelough."

"Yes," said Fitzsgerald," "and our old ruins are particularly striking—rising in their grim decay, monuments of the glory of past ages, when Ireland was the island of saints. There is always a soothing air of repose about them, particularly fascinating after the noise and turmoil of cities; the very sun himself seems to kiss them with—"

"What's that you're saying about kissing?" interrupted Charley, who had paid no attention to the beginning of this rhapsody.

"Confound you! you've pulled me up short, and I was actually rising to the sublime!" said Fitzgerald. "Hand me that bottle, Charley; what's in it?"

"Capital sherry, my boy!" said Charley, pushing it toward him.

"I'll be hanged if it's not prime!" said the dragoon, smacking his lips. "Upon my honor, Charley, my boy, I envy you. Nothing to do but to make love to all Marion Square, if you like, and no chance of being ordered away on foreign service when you least expect it."

"Still, a soldier's life is a glorious one!" said Dudley, "and the ladies, especially Irish ones—God bless 'em—know

the full value of a redcoat. I used to hear our fellows say Ireland was the soldier's paradise, and I am fully convinced of it now."

"Faith, I believe you!" said Fitzgerald, with such emphasis, that a roar of laughter followed; "did I ever tell you of a little adventure I had myself once down there in Galway?"

"No, what was it?" said both at once.

Fitzgerald drained a glass of wine, and began;

"It's some three years ago that I belonged to the tenth infantry, bad luck to them. Such a regiment as that I was never in before—a set of logger-heads that never got further than their fifth glass without being tipsy, and who'd no more salute a pretty girl than they'd fight a duel. Heaven knows what sin I'd committed that I was doomed to belong to such a set! but anyhow, it was so ordained; and we were ordered off to Galway—a perfect paradise of a place for a redcoat. Every night invitations were given to the other chaps; but would you believe it, they'd no more notice us than if we were a lot of hearse-drivers—and small blame to them for it, for I'll be hanged if ever I knew such a slow set of block-heads as the tenth. Not one of the other corps would notice us either, but would laugh at us whenever they'd meet us in the street.

"So matters continued for a while, until I was ready to shoot myself, to be rid of *ennui*. Nothing used to relieve my mind but climbing every morning to the top of a neighboring hill, and delivering myself of a wholesale *blessing* upon the infernal tenth. I used to feel better after it;

but, like all the other consolations of life, it didn't last long."

Here, overcome by melancholy recollections, Fitzgerald sighed deeply, and drained another glass of wine. Then, after a pause, he resumed:

"At last, we heard one day, that a ball was to be given at the house of one Mr. Malone; and, as usual, no notice was taken of us, though the other regiments were invited. Our fellows heard it with their usual stupid indifference; but my patience being quite worn out, I determined to go by hook or by crook. But how?—that was the question. If I went uninvited and was discovered, I was pretty sure of being kicked out; and how to obtain an invitation was a puzzle.

"In this dilemma I had recourse to my man, Tim Magrah, a fellow as full of clever devices and ingenuity as it's possible for an Irish valet to be — and that's saying a good deal. Tim promised to do his best; and I, with the utmost confidence in his ability, waited the result with impatience.

"At last, as evening approached, and the hour for the ball drew on, I began to lose patience; and just as I was about giving up the thing in despair, in came Tim with a bundle as big as knapsack, slung over his shoulder.

"'Hurroo! Misther Maurice, we're in the hoith o' luck. Sure I've hit on a beautiful plan!' says Tim, opening the bundle, and holding the contents up to view.

"'What's this?' said I, holding up something I took to be a bag, gathered at the top.

“ ‘ It’s a petticoat, no less?’ said Tim, ‘ and sure here’s another, for fear wan wouldn’t do ye!’ ”

“ ‘ What do you mean, you rascal?’ said I, in rising anger; ‘ is it in petticoats I am to go to the ball?’ ”

“ ‘ Troth thin, av ye don’t yer likely to stay at home,’ said Tim; ‘ sorry one o’ me knows how yer to go av ye don’t wear them.’ ”

“ ‘ But how?’ said I completely at a loss; ‘ explain yourself, Tim.’ ”

“ ‘ Faix that same’s aisy done!’ said Tim; ‘ afther ye tould me ye wanted to go, I set to work cudgeling my brain to find out some way, but sorra taste I seemed to get nearer it. At last, as I was goin’ to give it up, who comes in but Paddy Flinn, a second cousin av my own by the mother’s side. So we sits down to talk over ould times, and Paddy tells me he’d only arrived that morning from Cork, an’ that he was a coachman wid an ould maid, who had a niece—a nephew I mane—in the army, a great fighter entirely, an’ that this ould lady was goin’ to the ball to-night. So when I hears that, “Tim,” says I to myself, “here’s a chance for you now,” and aff I starts post-haste for the hotel where the ould maid was. She axes my business, an’ I up an’ tells her her nephew had fought a *jewel*, and wasn’t expected to live—God forgive me for tellin’ a lie! Och! murther, Misther Maurice darlin’, av ye’d hear the yell the old crayther let out av her whin she heard that. ‘Pon my sowl ye’d think she was shot. Up she gets, an’ gives orders to pack up an’ start *immaydently*, and shure I watched her myself goin’ aff. Arrah? may I nivir brathe av I’m not a *jaynus*!’ ”

“ Well, but, Tim,’ said I, ‘ what has all this to do with my going to the ball !’

“ ‘ Bad scran to ye !’ says Tim, ‘ sure yer uncommon stupid the night. Arrah ! what’s to hinder ye from dressin’ yerself up, and passin’ yerself aff for Miss Burke. Devil a wan in Galway knows her, except, maybe, seein’ her once or so, an’ as she’s mighty tall, they’ll niver know the differ.’

“ At first I hesitated a little, but finally yielding to Tim’s logic, I allowed him to dress me in the garments he had borrowed for the occasion. Heaven preserve me from ever wearing petticoats again ! Every step I took I nearly tumbled over my own head. A neat wig and a little black and red paint completely metamorphosed me, and I doubt if my own mother would have known her dutiful son in the tall, dignified, rouged lady I then was.

“ ‘ Sthrike me lucky !’ says Tim, surveying me with admiration, ‘ av yer not a beauty, like Andy Sha’s foal. Av ye war only a thrifle smaller about the waist, ye’d be the darlin’ all out. Don’t be trampin’ that way, as if wor on parade ; an’ don’t spake too loud, nor make too *bould*, and ther’s no fear but ye’ll be the belle there to-night.’

“ I reached the house, and was cordially received by the host, who little dreamed that a dashing lieutenant stood in the place of Miss Burke. Several gentlemen paid me particular attention during the evening, and one actually proposed. I blushed behind my fan, and referred him to ‘ papa.’ But I see you’re laughing at me, so I’ll modestly pass over that part of the evening’s adventures.

“When the dancing was at its height, I chanced to pass the dining-room, and, seeing it deserted, I thought I might as well go in and help myself to a glass of wine. I did so; but scarcely had I entered, when I heard a footstep behind me. I drew back into the shadow, and a moment after a tall, thin young fellow, a lieutenant in the regiment, for whom I had long felt a particular spite, entered, followed by a servant.

“‘Here,’ said the officer, hastily, handing the man a note, ‘do you know where to find a Miss Mary Ann O’Brien in the dancing-room?’

“‘Yes,’ said the servant; ‘I saw her dancing there a minute ago.’

“‘Give her this, then,’ said the lieutenant, ‘and lose no time.’

“Both went out, and I soon followed. As I entered the hall I noticed the note lying on the ground, where the fellow had probably dropped it. I picked it up, and, without thinking how mean the act was, opened and read:

“MY DARLING MARY ANN:—Meet me in the garden immediately. A carriage is in waiting, and the parson is ready to make you mine,

“‘Your devoted

“‘GEORGE BROWNE.’

“In an instant every consideration was lost in the one desire of *selling* the lieutenant, who had often laughed at me. Hastily stealing away to the dressing-room, I donned a bonnet and cloak, putting the latter on wrong side out in my haste, and, hiding my beautiful face behind a thick veil, I slipped out to the garden unnoticed. I looked around, but

no one was to be seen. At length a head protruded from behind some gooseberry bushes, and the voice of the lieutenant whispered :

“ ‘ My love, is that you ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Faith, I’ve my doubts whether it is or not ! ’ thought I. Then, raising my voice to a whisper, I answered :

“ ‘ Yes. ’ ”

“ In a moment the ardent lover sprang forward, and, catching me in his arms, pressed me to his heart with such force that I was nearly strangled.

“ ‘ Lord ! ’ thought I, ‘ what ribs Mary Ann must have, if she can stand that. ’ ”

“ ‘ I knew you would come to your own George, ’ continued the lover, ‘ my soul’s idol, my heart’s treasure, my darling, my beautiful Mary Ann. Oh ! my love, how happy we will be when the parson makes us one. ’ ”

“ ‘ There’s no doubt of that, ’ thinks I to myself, smothering with laughter, and shaking so that I began to fear I’d burst the hooks and eyes off my dress. My inward convulsions, however, were set down to quite another cause by my ardent admirer, who, pressing me once more to his bosom, for I was too weak with laughter to resist, exclaimed, soothingly :

“ ‘ Nay, my angel, my adored one, never tremble so ; there is no danger now, the carriage is waiting, and we will soon be safe. Come, my beloved. ’ ”

“ The lieutenant drew my arm within his and handed me into the coach ; and giving the word to the driver, off we

went at break-neck speed. All the absurdity of the whole affair burst upon me, sundry hysteric grunts of suppressed laughter burst from me, while the seat shook with my inward convulsions.

“ ‘Oh! my love, weep not!’ said the lieutenant, setting down my agitation to maiden timidity. But all his efforts were in vain. I only shook the more—I was in fact, inconsolable.

“ ‘At length we reached the church, my lover led me in to where the parson stood; and I would soon have been Mrs. Browne, but at this interesting moment in rushed Tim, breathless with haste.

“ ‘Och, masther dear, for the love o’ God, it’s not goin’ to be married ye are? Och! whillalu *miellien*, murther, is it a runaway match ye’s made of it. Bad scrán to ye, ye thafe of the world!’ he added, fiercely, to the astounded lieutenant, ‘is it ’lopin’ wid the masther ye are? Arrah! Misther Maurice, is it tryin’ to desave ye they are?’

“ ‘Faith! it’s very like it!’ said I, rasing my vail, and turning to the lieutenant, who uttered a cry of surprise, exclaiming, as he staggered back:

“ ‘Good heaven! Maurice Fitzgerald!’

“ ‘At your service, sir!’ said I, bowing, ‘I hope you’ll be a little more sure of your game the next time you try to run away with a lady. On my conscience, I’m afraid I’ll lose my reputation if this is heard of. Give my love to your adored Mary Ann, and much good may you do her.’

“ So saying, I turned away, followed by Tim, not, however,

until he had shaken his fist fiercely in the lieutenant's face, exclaiming :

“ ‘ Av ye dare to say *pays*, I'll not lave a whole bone in your dirty carcase !’

“ The story soon got wind, and the luckless lieutenant was received with such a shower of ridicule wherever he went, that he exchanged into a regiment ordered for foreign service ; and I have never heard of him since. As for me, I became the lion of Galway after that, and soon after *cut* the tenth, and joined the dragoons. So that was my elopement. Faith, I never came so near being made a wife of since !”

A roar of laughter followed the conclusion of the dragoon's story, in which he himself heartily joined.

“ You had a narrow escape from matrimony that time,” said Sir Harry. “ I presume you were a great favorite with the ladies after that ?”

“ Oh ! I always was that,” said Fitzgerald coolly. “ The dear little souls like impudence as well as the worst of us. And speaking of impudence reminds me that old Magee hasn't invited me to his dinner-party to-day. He's sent you an invitation, of course, Charley ?”

“ Yes ; I believe so. Were you ever there, Dudley ?”

A significant shrug and a contemptuous “ *no*,” was the baronet's answer.

“ Upon my honor, then, you might be in worse places ! Eh, Charley ?” said Fitzgerald.

“ It's a perfect paradise of roast fowls and champagne !” said Charley.

“And speaking of paradise reminds me that he’s got a very pretty little niece. Ah, Charley, my dear fellow, you’re in luck there,” observed the dragoon.

“I beg to know why? I am not aware of standing in such high favor in the young lady’s estimation. I rather think you only imagine so.”

“No such thing, my boy. The little girl’s in love with you; and that same little girl’s got the neatest little foot I ever clapped my two eyes on. Really, Dudley, it would be worth your while to get acquainted there for the sake of the old fellow’s niece.”

“Even that consideration, Lieutenant Fitzgerald, cannot induce me to visit Mr. Magee,” said the *aid-de-camp*, with the most ceremonious politeness.

“Oh! well, then, I’ll not force you. You Englishmen have some queer notions of your own. One would think Charley here was a native—he takes to the Irish so naturally. I think it’s partly owing to my humble efforts, however. I’ve acted the part of dry-nurse to him ever since he first crossed the channel.”

“You’ve been a mother to me.” said Mr. Sidney, gratefully.

“Yes; and, please Providence, I’ve not done with you yet. If I don’t send you back to England a genuine Paddy, then you may say Maurice Fitzgerald can’t keep his word. Come, Dudley, it’s time we were at the barracks. Good-day to you, Charley!” And passing his arm through Sir Harry’s the two soldiers went off.

Such were Charley Sidney's associates, and such his college life in Dublin—a life just suited to him.

How little did his friends at Dirritole, who often wondered how “poor, dear Charley” could endure the tedium of a college, know how his time was spent. Almost every night out till daylight, bent on mischief; passing the day strolling through the city, driving fast horses. Such was Charley's life.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PLOT THICKENS.

“ On every lip a speechless horror dwelt,
On every brow the burden of affliction,
The old ancestral spirits knew and felt
The house’s malediction.”—*Thomas Hood.*

AND now we must cast a glance backward, and return to the night on which Kate was captured in the old Moor Manor.

As every other night will do, whether the hours flit by on “rosy wings” or drag on like ages of agony, that night passed. The terrible spectre of the doomed house came gliding by like an evil shadow at the usual hour, and then all remained profoundly quiet until morning.

Alice, worn out and exhausted by anxiety, lay sleeping a deep, dreamless sleep. John was snoring away in the chimney-corner, and even the earl nodded drowsily. Of the whole party, Janie was the only one who slept not. In vain she strove to court slumber—it came not; a strange heaviness lay on her heart—a presentiment of some impending evil, greater than any she had yet experienced, hung over her. She strove to stifle her presentiment by thinking that, now Miss Sidney knew of their fate, they were safe; for Janie had unbounded confidence in Kate’s ability to do as she promised.

The earl, she reasoned, would leave, as usual, at daybreak, then Kate would quit her hiding-place, and in a few hours they would be free. But all was in vain ; the strange depression of Janie's spirits continued—reason as she would, the unaccountable fear of some impending calamity hung over her.

The gray dawn of twilight came creeping at last over the moor. The earl arose, and, shaking off by an effort his drowsiness, paced up and down the floor several times, as if fully to arouse himself.

“Pray Heaven he may go at once,” thought Janie.

Her prayer seemed in a fair way of being answered, for going over to John, the earl shook him roughly, saying :

“Come, wake up, sir—I must be going.”

John rubbed his eyes and yawned fearfully ; then rising, he walked away like one only half awake from the room, and soon re-appeared, leading the earl's horse saddled and bridled, and ready for the road.

“Thank Heaven !” murmured Janie, as she saw him mount.

“We will now soon quit this place.”

But her thanksgiving came too soon ; for just at that moment, when she imagined all danger over, Kate's horse neighed loudly, and Janie's heart sank like lead in her bosom.

“What's that?” demanded the earl, starting suddenly at the sound.

Another loud neigh from the unlucky animal was his sole answer.

“So there *did* come some one here last night?’ said the

earl, springing from the saddle and catching John by the throat: "answer me villain, or by Heaven I'll blow your brains out where you stand!"

He drew a pistol from his bosom as he spoke, and John felt the cold muzzle pressed to his temple.

"Oh, my lord—my lord, spare my life! For God's sake don't murder me!" cried John, falling on his knees.

"Confess, scoundrel!" said the earl, fiercely, still holding the pistol to his head. "Who came here last night?"

"It was Miss Kate Sidney. Oh, my lord, don't murder me, for God's sake?" shrieked John, in dismay.

"Treacherous villain!" thundered the earl, livid with passion; "so you *have* dared to disobey my commands, and trumpeted what I have done to the world? But, by the heaven above me, you shall repent it! Where is Kate Sidney now?"

"He—he—here, my lord!" said John, his teeth chattering with terror.

"Lead me to her hiding-place, you low-born hound!" exclaimed his master hoarse with rage; "she, as well as you, shall rue meddling in my actions. Lead on, sirrah!"

Pale with fear, John arose, and preceded the earl to the room in which Kate had found refuge. In vain they searched it; the cage was empty—the bird had flown.

"Escaped!" exclaimed the earl, with an oath so fierce that John quailed in horror. "On, scoundrel! through every room in this old, infernal place you must go till you have found her; and when you have——"

The last of the sentence was lost in a hissing whisper that made John shudder with undefined terror.

Through every room they went, up rickety stair-cases, down long, echoing corridors, through old rooms, damp and moldy with age—even the hall containing the trap-door through which Kate had been taken was explored; but all in vain—no trace of the lost one was to be found. Even John lost his terror of the earl in the superstitious horror that crept over him, as the thought that *she had been carried off by ghosts* flashed across his mind.

“So she *has* escaped!” said the earl in a voice of concentrated passion, as after their fruitless search, they again returned to the room in which the others were. “And all this story about her being concealed here was only trumped up to delay me longer, and give her a chance to reach Dirritole. The scheme succeeded, but it shall be your last; if I am to be disgraced by you, you shall not survive it!”

He drew a pistol as he spoke, and took deliberate aim at John, who, wild with fear, had fallen on his knees before him.

“My lord, my lord! would you commit a murder?” shrieked Alice, throwing herself before him. “He is innocent—he has told you the truth. I swear to you, my lord, Kate Sidney sought shelter in there last night, and we have never seen her since.”

The earl’s hand dropped, and turning to Alice, he demanded, while his piercing gaze seemed to read her very soul:

“And this is the truth?”

“It is, my lord. I would not lie to save my life.”

“How came she here?”

“It was I, my lord,” interrupted Janie, boldly. “I brought her here to save Miss Alice.”

For a moment the earl glared upon her like a savage; then turning on his heel, he strode from the room.

“God have mercy!” gasped the white lips of Alice, “will he murder us all?”

As she spoke the earl entered, carrying in his hand a strong cord. Seizing John before he was aware of his intention, he hurled him violently to the ground, and proceeded to bind him hand and foot.

The terrified servant struggled violently to free himself; but raising his pistol, the earl hissed in a voice choked with suppressed passion:

“Cease your struggles, or, by Heaven, the contents of this shall lodge in your thick skull.”

This last argument was conclusive. John lay perfectly still, while the earl coolly bound him hand and foot. Then gagging him to prevent the possibility of his crying for help, he turned to Janie, and, seizing her wrists, said, sarcastically:

“We must prevent you using your tongue so much for the future, my dear; it may get you into trouble; and lest it should, I will take the precaution of binding this handkerchief over your mouth; and lest you should tire yourself walking, I will take you with me.”

Suiting the action to the word, he bound Janie hand and foot, as he had done John. Then rising, he turned to Alice, and said, sternly :

“ As for you, madam, I shall be obliged to leave you for a few hours. It is not probable, however, that if your friend has escaped, she will be able to take you away before my return ; and to prevent the possibility of your escaping during my absence, I shall fasten the door securely on the outside. As soon as those two are disposed of I shall take you to an asylum where even Miss Kate Sidney will not find you.”

The mocking sneer that accompanied his words gave his face the look of a demon. Half fainting, Alice sank on the floor, and covered her face with her hands, while the earl strode from the room.

In a few moments the sound of carriage wheels met their ear. It was the earl, bringing out the one in which they had arrived the night on which our story opens, and which had since that time remained in the old manor. Then re-entering, he half dragged, half led the prostrate servants out.

Alice heard the door slam to, then the sound of heavy bolts drawn across, then the carriage driving rapidly away, and she alone in the old manor.

Muffled to the eyes in a great-coat, with his hat slouched down over his face, the earl sat in the driver's seat, as they flew rapidly along in the road opposite to that which led to Dirritole. The moor once passed, he studiously avoided the high-road ; and passing through narrow by-streets, with which he seemed perfectly familiar, he stopped at length be-

fore a low, filthy-looking tavern that stood by itself at some distance from any other dwelling.

The sound of wheels brought the landlord, a short, thick-set, villainous-looking man, to the door. His eyes sparkled as they fell on the earl, whom, in spite of his disguise, he immediately recognized.

“Ah? my lord, how d’ye do?” he said, in a tone of easy familiarity. “We’d begun to suspect you were going to give us the slip, after all. The captain insisted you weren’t going to come at all, and was going to cut his lucky to-morrow; the beaks are after him, you know, my lord.”

A look of disgust passed over the earl’s face, at the cool insolence of the fellow; but without noticing his vulgarity, he said, hastily:

“And when do you expect the captain here?”

“He’s here now, my lord; he always flies to the crib when the beaks is after him,” replied the man. “Will you walk in?”

“There are two persons in the carriage, Miles,” said the earl, lowering his voice. “Take care of them for the present, and take the carriage out of sight. I must leave it here for the present. You understand.”

“Perfectly,” said the fellow, with a knowing wink. “The beaks know better than to come here to look for anything. Walk in here; I’ll attend to the rest.”

He pushed open a door that led from the shop into a little dark den, half filled with smoke, and powerfully impregnated with the mingled odors of onions and tobacco.

Seated at a table in the middle of the floor smoking a short, black, stumpy pipe, was a man of middle age, of sinister and forbidding aspect.

“Well, my lord, you’ve arrived in port at last,” said the man, gruffly. “I’d a notion to hoist sail and leave you. Where’s the cargo?”

“Safe with Miles,” answered the earl, paying no attention to the effrontery of the fellow. “And now, captain, you may show the Bow street officers your heels as soon as you like.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered the captain. “Once on blue water, and I can laugh at them all. I never feel safe on dry land. Ah, my lord, cheating the revenue isn’t now what it once was.”

Here the captain sighed, overpowered by melancholy reflections.

“And what part of the globe is your destination now, captain!” inquired the earl.

“Cuba, if I can escape those pirates that are always cruising about there,” answered the captain.

“Cuba!” said the earl, musingly. “Yes, that will do very well. Once there, those two will not give me much trouble. Well, captain,” he added, raising his voice, “when do you start?”

“To-day, now that I’ve got the cargo,” said the captain. “The wind’s fair, and I won’t breathe freely until I’m on the deck of my cutter once more.”

“Then our business is at an end for the present,” said the earl, throwing a well-filled purse on the table. “At some fu-

ture day I may again require your services. In the meantime, you will find there the reward I promised you. Good-morning."

Drawing his hat over his brows once more, the earl left the room, and springing on his horse, which stood at the door, he started once more for the Moor Manor.

"Those two, at least, are disposed of," he muttered, as he rode along. "And now for Alice. I think I have too much influence over her to betray me; and if I can silence Kate Sidney's tongue, and all will yet be well. How artfully the jade craved permission to visit her friend! If I had only refused, she might have betrayed herself, and told me all. Alice once out of my way, I will find some means of keeping Kate's tongue quiet, and I will hurry on this match between Arndale and Lord Netterville's daughter. Her fortune is said to be enormous, and the lady herself is as anxious for the match as any of us. Yes, my plans *must* succeed."

So saying, he rode rapidly forward, and soon came in sight of the dreary old manor. Alighting from his horse, he eagerly approached the door to discover if it had been visited during his absence; but no—everything was just as he had left it.

Hastily withdrawing the bolts, he pushed open the door and entered. Everything, with one exception, was precisely the same as when he went away; the fire was still burning, the carriage cushions still lay scattered over the floor, but *Alice was gone.*

Doubting the evidence of his senses, the earl sought everywhere, but all in vain. No trace of the lost one could be found.

“What can be the cause of this?” thought the earl, bewildered. “Is it possible this place can be enchanted! It would have been impossible for her to escape herself, and if Kate Sidney had returned to rescue her, they would not take the trouble to fasten the door again so securely. On the contrary, they would most probably have lingered here anticipating my return. Then again it would be impossible for her to ride to Dirritole since, much less to walk there and return with a reinforcement to rescue Alice. Strange, strange! What is to be done?”

He paced up and down the floor, lost in thought. At length, starting from his reverie, he exclaimed:

“Yes, desperate as is the venture, I will risk it. I will ride to Dirritole and see if they have arrived there. If they have, and this story has become rumored abroad, I must fly, at least for the present, until this affair has blown over. Captain Hamilton sails to-morrow for Cuba. I can accompany him, for, in any case, my business requires my presence there soon; and by going now I can escape detection, and likewise arrange my affairs. Then, too, we will probably arrive before the smuggler’s cutter, and I can see that every possibility of the return of those two under his charge be cut off.”

As he spoke he rode forward in the direction of Dirritole, cautiously keeping as much as possible from observation. As he entered the forest path he encountered the young gentlemen in the ragged pantaloons who had brought Janie’s note to Kate the preceding day. The idea instantly flashed

across his mind that perhaps he might give him some information.

"Hillo, boy!" he called. "Have you seen any one pass this way lately?"

The boy stared at him for a moment, and as he recognized the earl, he gave his tattered head-piece a jerk, and answered:

"I hain't seed nobody since I seed the young lady."

"What young lady?" said the earl, growing pale.

"Miss Kate Sidney, wot lives up there," pointing as he spoke toward the mansion, the peaked gables of which could be distinguished above the tree-tops. "She guv me three bobs—leastwise she *didn't*, but t'other nice young woman did."

"What!" exclaimed the earl, in a tone that made the young gentleman start back in alarm. "Do you mean to tell me they were *both* here? Speak, sirrah!"

"I'm blest if I know!" replied the owner of the ragged garments. "Anyways, Miss Kate Sidney *was* here. I seed her with my own two blessed heyes; and t'other one guy me three bobs. As if you calls them *both*, they *was* here, and no mistake."

In his consternation, the earl forgot to ask *when* he had seen them—for the idea that it could have been the day previous never entered his mind; and the young gentleman, under the impression that the earl knew the time of their meeting, never dreamed of telling him. Thus they labored under a mutual misunderstanding.

What was to be done? The whole affair was probably by this time known not only to the household at Dirritole, but also at the Pines; and even now his name might be loaded with execration. He could not venture to return home just at that time, when every voice would be raised against him.

What, then, was to be done? He might fly, but what a triumph that would give his enemies! He gnashed his teeth with rage at the thought. No, they should not think he had fled through fear—some expedient must be adopted. If he left England now, in a few months this affair would be nearly forgotten, and he might return in peace once more.

True, his favorite scheme of uniting his son to Lord Netterville's daughter would have to be given up, and the infamy of his base conduct must still cling to him; but *that* could not now be avoided—his sin had found him out. Besides, he was wealthy—and the world is ever partial in judging the crimes of the rich. He would write to the countess under the plea that business so urgent called him away as to render it out of his power to visit her before his departure, and thus the disgrace of his flight would be hidden. These thoughts flashed rapidly across his mind; and turning to the knight of the ragged garments, he said:

“Can I trust you to carry a note from me to Lady Danemore, boy?”

“If you'll tip the needful, I'm your man,” said the young gent, coolly determined to have his pay beforehand, lest the countess should treat him as Kate had done.

“You should teach your tongue a little more respect when

addressing *me*, sirrah!" said the earl, harshly, as he tore a leaf from his tablets, and began to write.

"Nobody never teached me no *perliteness*," replied the young gentleman in the torn unmentionables. "I's willin' for to larn, 'cause as how I hain't got nothin' else to do. If nobody won't larn me, 'tain't to be expected I'd be *particularly* *perlite*."

The earl took no notice of this reasonable objection to his want of *perliteness*, but wrote rapidly :

"MY DEAR MADELINE:—Business of the utmost importance calls me from home; so urgent is it that it is impossible for me to have the pleasure of seeing you before my departure. I hope to return in a few weeks. Meantime, I remain

"Your affectionate husband,

"REGINALD ALVA,

"Earl of Danemore."

Carefully folding this, he threw the lad a sovereign, and as he took the note, the earl said :

"Mind, fellow, and deliver this faithfully, or you shall repent it. And—hark ye!—say nothing of having seen me here. If they ask you where we met, say at Stanton, at Chesbro'—anywhere ten miles distant. Remember!" he said, warningly, as the boy turned away.

"All right as a trivet!" was the answer, as the tattered pantaloons were put in locomotion, and the young gentleman inside them drew himself up in the conscious dignity of being sole owner and proprietor of a sovereign; and cocking his nose in the air, he turned out ten toes, that peeped from his

worn-out shoes like so many muddy small potatoes, and marched toward Dirritole.

The earl watched him until he disappeared ; then, turning his horse in the opposite direction, rode rapidly away.

And when the sun arose next morning, the Earl of Danemore stood on the deck of the merchantman, in full sail for Cuba.

CHAPTER XVI.

KATE ON THE SEA.

“Oh! gloriously upon the deep
The gallant vessel rides;
And she is mistress of the winds,
And mistress of the tides.

“But alas! for the widows’ and orphans’ tears,
When the death-flag sweeps the wave!
Alas! that the laurel of victory
Must grow but upon the grave.”—*Miss Landon.*

SLOWLY and wearily the days glided by to Kate in her subteranean prison—seeing no one but the old negress and the young quadroon, Syra. Her eyes yearned to look once more upon the blue sky, to breathe the fresh air, and catch a glimpse of the world once more. Her days were spent almost continually in thinking of Alice, whom she still imagined a prisoner in the manor; and then her thoughts would revert to her uncle, and her cheeks would flush with the honest glow of indignation, and her eyes would flash as she thought of his baseness. Then at times her thoughts would revert to the young rover chief and the quadroon girl, Syra. How came he, so young, so refined, so handsome, so noble looking, to be the leader of a gang of outlaws—a crew of blood-thirsty pirates? She had often heard of Captain Raymond—heard

him spoken of as a demon in man's form—one whose deeds of blood might make the firmest heart quail, and the strongest cheek blanch; and now she had seen him—*could* it be? *Could* those blue eyes, so beautiful and sad, ever flash with the light of murder? Could those hands, small and delicately shaped as a girl's, ever shed a fellow-creature's blood? Could that voice, so gentle and musical, ever shout the death-cry of the pirates! Oh! no, no, no! Kate's heart recoiled from the thought. Whatever fate had driven him here from the society of the high-born and refined to which he felt he ought to belong, he could *never* become a deliberate murderer.

And Syra, this dark browed, wild hearted, passionate child of the South, dying with love for him—would he ever care for her? Kate sighed as she thought of that impulsive young heart pouring out its treasures of love at the feet of one, who, she felt sure, would never regard her as other than a servant. Poor Syra! the great, mournful black eyes would light and sparkle with joy at the mention of that loved name, and her dark face would flush with deepest joy at the thought of his return home. Everything *his* hand had touched was sacred in her eyes; everything was arranged for the sole purpose of affording him pleasure. The wild, untaught child of nature worshiped him as an Eastern devotee does his idol; she knew no other god but him; willingly, joyfully, she would have lain down and died at his feet, had he commanded it. And all this time she clung, as a drowning man will to a straw, to the hope that he would love her yet. He was not made of marble; he could not always withstand this

wild love given him so freely : she was young and fair, and *worshipped* him. Oh ! surely, surely, that heart she would have died to save would love her yet.

Of late, Kate had avoided mentioning his name to her.

For some time after his departure, Syra would sit by her side talking of him alone for hours ; but once, when Kate accidentally remarked that one so young and handsome might win the heart of the fairest lady in the land, the quadroon's fierce black eyes emitted a sharp flash of jealousy ; and from that day forward her manner toward Kate changed.

She grew cold and reserved, never speaking, unless to answer a question ; and then if it related, even in the most distant way, to the young chief, the same suspicious light kindled her eye.

Kate well knew the reason of this change, and might have smiled perhaps at the idea of being in love with Captain Raymond, had she not felt her lonely situation too keenly. Syra's readiness to converse had at first made the hours pass unperceived ; but now, with no companion, save her own sad thoughts, they dragged on like ages. The effect of confinement, and brooding in silence over the restraint of which she was too proud to complain, soon betrayed itself in her pale cheek, listless eye, and languid step.

A week or two had thus passed, when one morning Kate was aroused by the sound of many feet in the adjoining chamber, and numerous rough voices speaking loudly.

Rising hastily, she dressed and rang the bell, and in a few moments Aunt Moll made her appearance.

“What is the cause of this unusual noise?” demanded Kate, as the old woman entered.

“Laws, chile, marse cappen’s back; ’deed he is, chile; he’s arriv’ Dey all ’rived las’ night, an’ dey been commin’ eber since. One o’ dem trowed his ’fernal old punch-bowl at my head. I dodged him, an’ it hit Black Simon right in de eye. He, he, he! Sarve him right, too. De Lor’ knows what de forsooken ole heathen would a done nex’ if marse cappen hadn’t drapt in an’ gin him a kick which like ter knock his brains out. ’Deed he did, honey. Sarve him right, too.”

Kate felt a sensation of pleasure at hearing the young chieftain had returned. But she carefully concealed every outward sign of satisfaction, and inquired for Syra.

“Lor’ chile!” replied the old woman—it is thus she invariably addressed every one—“she’s wid young marse. Nebber seed anybody crazy ’bout any one like she is ’bout him. Dar, now, I’ll fetch you in breakfas’, honey. I specs you’s hungry by dis time, and you an’ marse cappen’ll raise Sam if I doesn’t tend to you. He, he, he!”

And with her usual chuckle, Aunt Moll departed.

Kate’s slender meal was soon over, and she was again left to her own thoughts. At length she was aroused by a light footstep; and looking up, she saw the quadroon standing before her. Her cheeks were flushed to a burning red, and her great black eyes had a streaming, unnatural light. Poor Syra! it was the baleful light of jealousy.

“Captain Raymond bade me ask if you would grant him the *favor* of an interview,” she said.

Kate lifted her eyes to the face of the quadroon in surprise. There was something in her tone which startled her ; the words were spoken with such concentrated fierceness. Kate felt amazed that *she* should be the subject of a slave girl's jealousy ; her aristocratic pride shrank from such a thought, and holding her head erect, she said coldly :

“ You may tell Captain Raymond I shall be very happy to see him at *any* time. His presence will at least make my prison a *little* more endurable.”

A fierce flash shot from Syra's black eyes, as, compressing her lips, she turned away to deliver her message.

“ That I should be despised for *her*,” she said, fiercely. “ I, who am a thousand times more beautiful than she. Why did she come here? He might have loved me but for her. *I hate her!*” she hissed in a tone of deep passion ; “ *and I wish she were dead!*”

Her face actually grew livid with passion ; her beautiful features worked convulsively, and her small hands clenched together until they grew bloodless.

Meanwhile Kate's thoughts ran on in a very different strain, but they were of the same person.

“ What delicacy,” she murmured, “ not to intrude ! Can one so perfectly gentleman-like, *so* refined, be really a pirate captain? Strange, strange ! What can ever have brought him to this ?”

Her meditations were brought to an end by the entrance of the young captain himself. With an easy smile he advanced to Kate and held out his hand.

"*How* handsome! What beautiful eyes he has!" was woman-like Kate's first thought as she arose to welcome him.

"And how has the time passed since my departure?" he asked, seating himself. "I trust my servants have attended to your comfort."

"I thank you, yes. As a captive, I have been far better provided for than I could expect."

"You cannot regret your captivity more than I do," he said, quickly. "What strange freak of fortune led you here I cannot account for. But while you stay I trust at least to provide for your bodily comfort."

Kate sighed.

"You are looking very pale, Miss Sidney," said Captain Raymond, a slight shade passing over his handsome face. "I wish to Heaven I dared restore you to your friends."

He rose from his seat and began to pace the floor rapidly, while Kate regarded him, scarcely knowing what to say. At length he stopped abruptly, and said:

"Would you venture on the sea? My men are rough and savage: but they are perfectly under my control, and you would be safe. Syra can accompany you, and you need fear nothing; though only a pirate chief, I have not forgotten I was *once* a gentleman."

A look inexpressibly sad shone in his deep, dark eyes; but Kate did not notice it. Her heart bounded at his words; she might yet escape; or if not, she would at least breathe the blessed air of heaven once more. Without a moment's hesitation she looked up and said, quietly:

“I will go with you.”

An expression of pleasure flitted across his face ; but as if fearing she had decided hastily, he said :

“But consider first the danger. We are always exposed to storms, shipwreck, and disasters on sea, from which we are safe on land. Besides, we are *pirates*; we must follow our calling, and scenes of bloodshed and death are hardly fitted for a lady’s eyes.”

Kate shuddered. Her new-born hope seemed about to be crushed in its birth ; and she saw before her long, dreary days of solitude and gloom in the old Moor Manor. The young chief saw the sudden look of disappointment, and resumed :

“I do not say positively these *will* occur ; I only speak of probabilities. I do not wish to draw you blindly with me. Consider—I have named the dangers, but then its advantages will be far above this lonely subterranean residence. As you decide, so shall it be.”

Kate paused for a moment ; but even the dangers would be far preferable to the dismal solitude here, and she said, firmly :

“I will brave all dangers and go with *you*. This dismal place would soon drive me insane.”

“Be it so,” said Captain Raymond, gayly. “It will not be the first time the Water Witch has been graced by the presence of a lady. I trust you will find your residence there pleasanter than it has been here. The sea breezes will soon bring back your lost roses.”

The young lady courtesied.

"When do you start?" she said, smiling.

"Oh, immediately, if possible, or at least as soon as everything can be got ready. I soon tire of the land, and cannot be off too soon for blue water. My men, too, like true sailors, are growing weary of delay, and must be off."

There was a pause. Kate scarcely heard his words; she was thinking of something else.

"I wish you would tell me of those with whom I was in the manor," she said, at length, looking up anxiously in his face. I am sure you know. Do tell me."

"They are gone."

"Gone!" repeated Kate, starting to her feet, "Where!" How! When did they go?"

"Really, Miss Sidney, that is more than I can tell you. They were here when I left, and were gone the next day. They have not returned since. Perhaps," he said, with a slight smile, "the ghost frightened them away."

"The ghost," repeated Kate, vacantly.

"Yes, the ghost of the old Moor Manor. You have heard it is haunted, I presume?" he said, with a wicked twinkle of his blue eye.

"Yes," said Kate, looking up in his face with a half smile. "I certainly have heard of it, but I begin to think it is a flesh-and-blood ghost."

"Upon my honor, Miss Sidney, I give you credit for great penetration. Pray, who told you it was a flesh-and-blood ghost?"

“Not you, certainly,” said Kate. “But confess, sir, it is not so? Is this ghost not an ingenious device for frightening people away from the old Moor Manor!”

“No, Miss Sidney, I cannot claim the honor of devising that project. It was one of my men,” he replied, laughing. “When first—long before I joined them—they used this old mansion for a rendezvous, they found these subterranean vaults so useful that they determined not to be troubled with visitors. For this purpose they undertook to play the ghost. A mask, resembling a skeleton, a little red ochre to represent blood, some phosphorus to give them the appearance of being enveloped in flames, and the disguise was perfect. The place soon got the reputation of being haunted, and people would sooner go ten miles round than pass here. Some fool-hardy braggarts, having more brandy than wisdom in their heads, undertook to spend a night here, but one sight of the ghost and its awful groans sent them flying with shrieks of terror.”

“Still,” said Kate, “it puzzles me how they could pass through the room and disappear, as ghosts ought to do, without exciting suspicion. Spirits, you know, don’t generally open doors to go out.”

“Very true,” said the captain, “and neither does the ghost of the old Moor Manor. There is a passage which connects these under-ground chambers with the rooms above. Through this passage they go into a suite of rooms directly overhead of the one in which you were. This old manor is full of secret doors, constructed for Heaven knows what evil

purpose. These my men, by dint of long search, have discovered; and by their aid they are enabled to play the ghost to perfection. The ghost enters through a secret door, which opens noiselessly by a spring; and keeping down in the shadow, where its fiery garments will stand boldly out, passes across the room, and vanishes through another secret door."

"Well, I *must* say it is a very ingenious plan," said Kate; "and one I suppose which has succeeded in securing your domain from intruders."

"It certainly has," answered Captain Raymond," until of late. In vain the ghost has tried to drive the party *you* came with away. Nothing could succeed until of late; it appeared regularly every night, but all in vain; it tramped overhead, but still they staid. It frightened them terribly—there can be no doubt of *that*—but not enough to make them leave. It must have been, indeed, a strong inducement that made them remain here."

This was said inquiringly, as if to draw from Kate an explanation. If such was his purpose, it most signally failed, however. Miss Sidney had no intention of betraying family secrets to the rover chief.

A few moments after he took his leave. As he rose to go, Kate said:

"I must thank you again for the kindness with which you have placed both these rooms at my disposal. But as I am aware there is no other room you can use here but this, I must beg of you to occupy it. I seldom or never leave my

sleeping apartment even in day-time, so I beg you will have no delicacy in accepting it."

"I thank you, Miss Sidney," said the young captain, with a smile. "I willingly accept your offer in the same spirit in which it is made. I must own I am often reduced to a strait when I wish to read, or write, or remain by myself. The outer apartments are always filled with my noisy crew, so that it is impossible to remain one moment quiet. Therefore I shall make use of this room for a few hours each day, but you must still continue to consider it your own. I shall now direct Syra to prepare for departure with you, so I shall bid you adieu for the present."

During the few days that remained before their departure, Kate and the pirate captain had frequent interviews. And after each Kate noticed that the fierce look of jealousy increased in the quadroon's face. A fiery look of intense hate flashed from her black eyes whenever she encountered Kate. Tortured by the pangs of jealousy, poor Syra was miserable indeed.

Kate noticed her growing hatred toward herself with a feeling of sincere regret. She could sympathize with the poor girl, whose passionate heart gave, unasked, all her hope of happiness in this life into another's keeping. And he—how little he cared for her! It was doubtful whether he even dreamed that this handsome slave girl could possibly love him. The light smile with which he met her, the careless glance of his blue eye, the tone of easy superiority in which he addressed her, left little room to doubt that he merely con-

sidered her a very handsome servant—but still a *servant*. And had Syra not been blinded by her mad passion, she would have seen, likewise, that in Miss Sidney he only saw a lady—one whom, as belonging to a superior rank, he was obliged to treat as became a lady—one whom, as his *captive*, he was forced to care for. But Syra saw not this in his frequent visits to her—she saw only the lover visiting his lady-love; and, as she saw him enter Kate's room, a new degree of hate filled her heart toward her rival.

When he informed her of his design of bringing Kate with him, her jealous fears were confirmed.

“He cannot endure to be parted from the woman he loves!” she exclaimed, bitterly. “Many and many a time he went before, leaving *me* here to wait for his return, unthought of and uncared for. And she—she does not, she *cannot* love him as I do, I who would die for him joyfully. But she will *never* be his bride—no, NEVER, if I have to slay her in his arms!”

Little dreaming of the resolution of the quadroon, Kate sat one evening alone in her little sleeping-chamber, her chin resting upon her hand, her eyes fixed vacantly upon the wall, her thoughts of Syra and the young pirate chief she so passionately loved. Her own feelings toward him it would be hard to analyze. She despised and loathed the profession, but in spite of herself she admired the man; she shuddered as she thought of his crime, but some irresistible sympathy drew her toward him. There was little danger of her falling in love with him; she would as soon have dreamed of becoming a

pirate herself ; but still something she could not account for made her *like* him. Sometimes, if by chance he ever alluded to the past, his voice would become so inexpressibly sad that it went to her heart ; and looking into his mournful blue eyes, she would heave a sigh, and wonder what great sorrow he, so young, could have met with.

“ Perhaps like others, he has loved and lost,” thought Kate, as she mused. “ I wish I knew. And Syra, poor, half-crazed child, with her fiery, southern blood, and passionate nature, what will become of her ? I wonder if he knows she loves him. I will speak of her to him the very next time I meet him.”

She rose as she spoke, and pushing aside the heavy velvet curtain, stepped to the outer room. As she did so, she perceived to her surprise it was tenanted. Sitting at the table, his head leaning on his hand, his fair, clustering locks pushed impatiently off his white forehead, his large blue eyes fixed on vacancy, sat the object of her thoughts.

In the full glare of the lamp she could see distinctly the noble contour of the head, shaped like that of a prince—the fine features, classic as those of a Grecian statue, now wore a look of such deep, settled, immovable sorrow as Kate had never witnessed before. He could not see her where he sat, and she had a full opportunity of watching him unnoticed. The look of profound sorrow went to her heart, it was so seldom he looked thus—always gay, always animated, only sometimes the dreary expression would come, as though the world were, after all, a blank to him.

Kate shrank from intruding then, when his thoughts were

evidently far away. Accordingly she retreated behind the curtains, when the door opened, and Syra entered.

The young chief started, passed his hand across his brow, drew a long breath, then the sad, dreamy look was gone, and his usual one of careless good humor returned.

"Well, Syra, what is it?" he said.

Her message was a trifling one; evidently she had entered more to see if Kate were with him than for any other purpose. As soon as she was gone, Kate stepped out and stood before him.

"Ah, Miss Sidney!" he said, rising, "Syra has just been here to know if you will have your books packed to go on board? I answered yes, in your name, not wishing to disturb you."

"Thank you," said Kate; "I am glad you did so. By the way, captain, is Syra willing to go to sea?"

"Syra!" he repeated, in surprise. "I never asked her. Of course she must accompany you."

"She has grown very pale and thin of late," remarked Kate, seating herself. "I fear she has the disease of the heart. "

"What! I do not understand," said the young chief, in a tone that convinced Kate his thoughts were very little of Syra.

"I mean that I think she is in love," said Kate, making a desperate resolve to say the worst at once.

Captain Raymond uttered a prolonged "Oh!"

"I never was in love myself," said Kate, laughing; "but

I believe Syra has fallen into that unhappy state. I wonder who is the happy man?" and she glanced at him from under her long eyelashes.

"Really! I am sorry I cannot tell you," said Captain Raymond, smiling. "I'll make inquiry, if you like!"

"Oh, no! by no means!—pray don't trouble yourself!" said Kate, hurriedly, now thoroughly convinced how little he cared for poor Syra; "perhaps I am mistaken. We start to-morrow, do we not?" she asked, anxious to change the subject.

"To-morrow night, Heaven be praised!" replied Captain Raymond. "I shall not feel like myself until I am once more on the deck of my good vessel!"

Thus ended Kate's conversation concerning Syra. In the bustle and hurry of departure, she saw little more of him for some time after.

Two days later Kate sat in the cabin of the pirate ship. It had been fitted up in the most elegant style for the reception of Miss Sidney; and, as far as outward comfort went, her uncle's stately mansion of Dirritole did not surpass it. Old Moll had been left behind, by her own desire, declaring she couldn't stand "dem ar rampagin', tarrifyin', rip-stavin' sailors!"—but Syra accompanied Kate. Whither they were bound she had not asked; and, after being on board awhile, she felt little inclination to ask—being prostrated in body and mind by sea-sickness. And so Kate Sidney was on the blue sea, in a pirate vessel, outward bound.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DOOMED SHIP.

“The captain he is young and fair—
How can he look so young?
His locks of youth—his golden hair,
Are o’er his shoulders flung.

“The fiercest of our pirate band
Holds at his name the breath;
For there is blood on his right hand,
And in his heart is death!”

It was a glorious summer sunset—sunset on the sea! Not a breath of air was stirring; the sails flapped lazily against the mast, while the pirate vessel lay still and motionless on the glassy sea. The day had been, and still was, intensely warm; the hot rays of a tropical sun, streaming on the deck, had rendered it almost insupportable. An awning had been constructed which had rendered the burning heat somewhat more endurable; and sitting beneath it, gazing on the gorgeous scene around her, was Kate Sidney.

Not a cloud moved over the deep azure firmament, save a few white, fleecy specks, looking, to Kate’s eyes, like stray glimpses of angels’ wings. Far down in the horizon the red sun was slowly sinking, tinting the sky with brilliant purple, crimson and gold. The Waveless ocean reflected the gor-

geous dyes of the firmament in its polished surface, making the still scene beautiful beyond description. The deep silence that reigned rendered it still more impressive; for the sailors, overcome by the heat, lay indolently lounging about the deck, or leaning over the side of the vessel, to catch, if possible, a breath of air.

Everything on board the *Water Witch* was in the most perfect order, the deck scoured to a most shining whiteness, every rope hauled taut, everything in its place—for Captain Raymond maintained perfect order and discipline among his pirate crew.

Kate sat taking in the scene with the eye of an artist. Now her gaze would wander over the gorgeous but desolate scene around her, on which no living thing was to be seen save themselves; then it would wander over the trim deck, resting for a moment on the swarthy, savage-looking pirate crew—each one with a long, glittering knife stuck in his belt—their fierce faces and evil eyes making her involuntarily shudder, as she thought of the many deeds of blood committed by them; again it would wander to the opposite end of the vessel, where, leaning against the bulwarks, stood Syra. She formed a beautiful picture in the rich scene around; her white dress falling from her taper waist in graceful folds to her feet, her long, glossy, ebon ringlets streaming over her shoulders, while a turban of crimson satin was wound around her head. Her great black eyes were fixed earnestly yet dreamily on the face of the young captain, who lay leaning over the side of the ship, his eyes fixed on the bright waters

beneath. Now and then, at some passing thought, the vivid red on her oval cheeks would fade, the subdued light would die out in her magnificent eyes, and be supplied by a fierce flash, as they would rest for a moment on Kate.

And seated by herself, under the awning, watching the sun go down, Kate Sidney looked strangely out of place among the pirate crew. Plainly as she was dressed, in a simple robe of gray muslin, with a broad-leafed straw hat, there was about her the unmistakable stamp of a lady.

Poor Kate! she was sad and lonely enough. Her waking thoughts, and dreams by night, were of the friends behind, in "merrie England." Of her sad-browed aunt—of Lord Arndale, still ignorant of the fate of her he loved—of her brother Charley—of her base-hearted uncle—but most of all of poor Alice Desmond; a presentiment that the earl would discover her visit to the manor, and render the fate of Alice still more bitter, lay on her mind.

For herself, she did not so much care, though her fate was no enviable one. Although every respect was shown her, she still felt she was among lawless pirates; though every comfort she had been accustomed to from childhood was hers here, still she could not forget how it had possibly been obtained.

Then, too, the daily increasing jealousy of Syra rendered her miserable; she feared it might be discovered by the young chief himself—and then, what would follow. The pirate captain had often occupied her thoughts, too; but still the mystery regarding him remained unsolved. Sometimes, in

the midst of her conversation, he would appear on the point of revealing to her something of the past; but again he would check himself, and resuming his accustomed tone of careless drollery, seem to forget the impulse.

The sun at length sank beneath the horizon, the brilliant hues of the sky began to fade and flee from the gray shadows of evening; a slight breeze, too, arose, delightfully refreshing after the intense heat of the day. Under its reviving influences, the idle sails began to fill—the gallant bark sped merrily onward, as though rejoicing in its delightful coolness—the sailors arose from their lazy positions, and new life seemed to animate the drooping crew. Kate, too, felt its influence, and rising, she walked slowly over to where the captain still reclined. As Syra caught sight of her coming, she hastily retreated to a spot where she could watch them, and remain herself unseen; and she stood like a tigress preparing to spring on her prey.

“A glorious evening, captain,” said Kate, as she stood by his side; “one does not see many such sunsets in a life-time.”

He looked up with a start, for she had approached unheard; and Kate saw that his face still wore the same look she had seen on it once before.

He laughed—a sort of subdued laugh—and ran his fingers through his luxuriant, clustering hair, as he answered:

“Yes, a glorious sunset, indeed. Ah, Miss Sidney, there is no place like the wide ocean after all. ‘Free and unfettered, it spurns control’—something like myself, or as I would be. Still it is not in times like this, when everything

is as still and beautiful as a fairy tale of our childhood, that I love it best. No, give me the roaring blast that sends the good ship scudding, like a frightened courser, through the foam-crested waves, rising through the gloom of the storm like Alpine avalanches; when the lurid lightning shows us our course, then comes that wild enthusiasm, that fierce feeling of freedom, that none but a sailor can know. *Then* it is I love the boundless sea."

His eyes kindled, and his nostrils dilated with the sudden enthusiasm with which he had spoken. Kate listened quietly, and after a moment, replied :

"Yes, that is all very fine to you, I have no doubt; but if, like me, you were, at such times, at the last gasp with seasickness, you wouldn't wish so ardently for a storm. I remember, during the last storm we had, or gale, as you called it, how utterly miserable and wretched I felt; every time the vessel pitched headlong into the waves I prayed most devoutly she might go to the bottom at once, that I might be rid of the pangs I endured!"

Captain Raymond laughed; then, leaning over the side, he continued to watch the vessel as she danced through the now sparkling waves for some time in silence. Then, looking up, he said :

"How gallantly she cuts her way through the sea-foam—flying onward as if she, too, knew and rejoiced in her freedom. What a perfect little beauty she is, with her elegantly-modeled hull, and graceful, tapering spars!" and he ran his eyes aloft with a sailor's pride.

"I certainly have seen worse-looking vessels than the *Water Witch*," said Kate, composedly, following the direction of his eye; "what a savage-looking set your men are!"

"Upon my honor, Miss Sidney, you throw a terrible damp on my enthusiasm!" said Captain Raymond, with a good-natured laugh. "You are a terribly matter-of-fact person, I begin to think!"

"I fancy I will hardly ever make much of a sailor," replied Kate, smiling; "while the weather continues thus I do very well; but the very thought of a storm is fearful, not so much for the storm itself, but the demon that accompanies it—I mean sea-sickness—the very idea of it gives me a qualm!"

"I always fall into my old habits of day-dreaming on evenings like this," he said, after a pause, speaking evidently as much to himself as to Kate; "and yet how little there is left for me to dream about! The past seems like a dark dream to me now; and in the future there is nothing to look forward to but a grave. And yet sometimes I forget the present, and fancy myself once more rich and honored, and *loved*, as I was once; and I awake with a start, to remember I am only Captain Raymond; the rover chief, with a price on my head!"

He paused, and fixed his eyes steadily on the bright waves, while a shadow passed over his fine face. Kate stood, listening intently, with a look of deep sympathy in her dark eyes.

“Yes,” he went on, slowly, “strange as it may seem to you—strange as it seems now to myself—I was once wealthy and honored, with a name, Miss Sidney, as proud as your own, and of a family as old and aristocratic. Once I was heir to broad lands and stately mansions, with menials to bow at my word, and with friends who were proud to call me a descendant of their ancient house!”

“And yet you are here,” said Kate, sadly.

“And yet I am here—and here I will die! All has gone—all has faded like a dream, leaving nothing to wish, nothing to hope for in the future, either here or hereafter. I am unloved, an unloving man, one shunned by his fellow-men as accursed, with the brand of Cain on my brow—one who, like Ishmael of old, has his hand against every man’s, and every man’s hand against him! Well, be it so! I have a long score of revenge to wipe out against my race; and yet I never willingly shed blood. I am a free rover—I take without remorse what I can win on the wide ocean; yet, if I could avoid it, I would never slay a fellow-being. And still I have done it, still I do it, and still I will do it. Some dark fate, over which I have no control, seems hurrying me on to my destiny. Often and often, during the still hours of the night, the ghastly faces of those who have fallen by my hand rise before me. I can see them, as they fall backward, into the sea, their wild, agonized faces, their distorted eyes straining from their sockets—their hands stretched forth vainly striving to sue for mercy, or to ward off their death-blow. And then they go down, down, down! into the waves, red

with human blood, their dying cry of agony drowned under the bubbling waves! And I start up, to hear their white lips hiss 'murderer!' into my ear!"

He started to his feet, as he spoke, his face livid, and great drops of perspiration starting on his brow. Kate stood, listening, white with horror.

"I know not why I have told all this to you," he said, hurriedly, after a pause, during which he paced rapidly up and down—"except that you remind me of one I loved once—one who has forgotten me! Once, I——"

"*Sail, ho!*" cried the lookout, at this moment.

"Whereaway?" demanded Captain Raymond, his whole countenance changing, as if by magic, as he turned toward the mast head.

"On the lee bow, sir."

"Can you make her out?"

"Ay, ay, sir! A merchantman, heavily loaded!"

A cheer arose from the pirates at the words. They had not come across a prize since they started; and frequent were their oaths and murmurs at this want of luck, all of which they attributed to their having *women* on board. Now, the prospect of taking a prize elated them beyond measure, and their shouts for a moment were quite irrepressible.

Captain Raymond seized a glass and sprang into the rigging. There was a moment's breathless pause—all stood eagerly awaiting the result of the scrutiny.

"It's a merchantman!" he exclaimed, leaping once more to the deck. "bound, I take it, with a valuable cargo, from

Jamaica. All hands ahoy! Crowd on all sail after her—she will be a glorious prize! Merrily there, my men! work with a will! Our gallant little brig will soon overtake yonder overgrown ship.”

The men sprang willingly to their post; and a few moments after, the pirates were rapidly giving chase to the heavily-laden ship. Captain Raymond paced the quarter-deck rapidly, now and then raising his glass to examine the merchantman.

“Mast-head, ahoy!” he shouted, after a pause, during which the men stood eagerly regarding their prize.

“Ay, ay, sir!” came from the cross-trees.

“Can you make her out any plainer!”

“Yes, sir. She’s an English merchantman.”

“How far is she off?”

“Nearly two miles, sir.”

Again the pirate captain regarded the stranger through his glass. Then, lowering it, he muttered:

“About that, I fancy; and the moon is rising now. By the time we overhaul her, it will be clear as day. So much the better for us, and so much the worse for her!”

As he spoke, he approached Kate, who stood watching with breathless interest, the chase. Touching her on the shoulder, he said, hurriedly, as he passed:

“There may be danger at hand—you had better go below!”

In a moment he was gone, and giving his directions rapidly at the other end of the brig to his men. Kate looked after him a moment, and then turned again to watch the result of

the chase, with an interest scarcely inferior to that of the pirates themselves.

“Heaven grant they may escape!” was her fervent ejaculation, as she glanced at the kindling eyes and fierce faces of the pirate crew.

The moon had now risen in its radiant splendor, flooding the sea with silvery light. It was a lovely night; every object could be seen as plainly as by day, as the pirate brig rapidly approached the merchantman.

As the men passed to and fro on their various errands across the deck, Kate caught the sullen looks of discontent and fierce glances bestowed upon her, now and then accompanied by a low growl or a smothered curse. Still she remained too deeply excited by the chase and the thought of the approaching contest to quit the deck.

“This is no place for you—there is danger at hand! Go below!”

Kate looked up; it was Captain Raymond who had rapidly spoken the words as he passed. There was a kindling light in his eyes, and an impetuous tone in his voice that she had never heard there before. And still she lingered, unheeding the fierce growls and oaths from the pirates, which were every moment growing louder. The intense anxiety for the fate of the Englishman overcame every other feeling, and she remained.

The two vessels were now within a short distance of each other, and Kate could almost distinguish the throng of forms leaning over the bulwarks of the merchantman.

“By my soul, this will be a glorious night’s work!” cried the voice of the pirate chief, at a little distance from where she stood. “She will be a splendid prize! Ha! there goes her flag!”

As he spoke it fluttered for a moment on its way, and the next, the red cross of St. George floated proudly from the ship’s peak. The next instant she fired a gun.

“That’s a polite hint for us to show our bunting!” cried the pirate chief. “Hallo, Simon! up with the black flag!”

A shout arose from the pirate crew, and the next moment the ominous black flag with its skull and cross-bones, fluttered in the night breeze.

There was a moment’s death-like silence; then Kate fancied something like a groan of despair came from the merchantman. It might be fancy, however, for the next moment a fierce shout of defiance arose from the brave English crew.

“By all the fiends, they shall repent this boldness!” shouted the pirate captain, maddened by the taunt. “Ahoy, my men! take your stations for working ship. We’ll rake her fore and aft.”

The men flew to obey the order, and Captain Raymond approached the spot where Kate still stood. As he caught sight of her he advanced, and said sternly:

“Why will you be so obstinate? Don’t you see you are creating disorder among my men? Go below?”

Kate dared disobey no longer. Casting one look after the

brave merchantman, she turned and descended to the cabin. Syra stood in the middle of the floor, her hands clasped, her eyes almost straining from their very sockets, and listening intently to every sound; Kate knelt down and covered her face with her hands, as, with a sickening feeling of horror, she waited for the conflict to commence.

The few moments that followed seemed to her like ages. She could hear the hurrying to and fro, the tramp of many feet, the confused mingling of voices, and, clear and distinct as the tones of a trumpet, the clear, commanding voice of the pirate captain, high over all.

The restraint grew intolerable. Kate's high spirit chafed like a caged lion at the restraint. Springing to her feet, at length, she exclaimed:

"*I will see!*" and she cautiously ascended the cabin stairs. Here, crouching in the shadow, she was about to remain, when a deafening uproar, as though heaven itself was annihilated, crashed upon her ear, as the merchantman, suddenly turning discharged her whole broadside on the pirate brig.

For an instant, the air was filled with the shrieks of the dying and the groans of the wounded, mingled with the cries of rage and fierce oaths of the survivors.

"Death to the murdering dogs! Onward! my men—follow me!" shouted the pirate chief, hoarse with rage, as he sprang from the rigging of his own ship, sword in hand, into that of the merchantman, followed by his blood-thirsty crew.

For a few moments the carnage was awful. Shouts, oaths.

shrieks, and groans, mingled in horrible discord with the clash of steel and the report of fire-arms. The deck of the doomed ship was literally slippery with blood, and the waves around were purple with the same bloody hue.

“Onward! my men; slay, and spare not!” called the fierce tones of the pirate chief, as the crew of the merchantman fled, like grass before the mower, beneath the rapid blows of his sword.

“For God and St. George! death to the pirates!” shouted the brave Englishmen, as they met, hand to hand, with the pirates in the conflict.

Bravely the gallant crew of the merchantman fought, falling but fighting to the last. Slowly, but surely, overpowered by superior numbers, they retreated toward the round-house—the deck growing crimson with blood as they went, and the gallant band slowly, but surely, decreasing.

Suddenly they fled, and the pirates closely wedged together, and, unable to retreat, saw themselves standing by the yawning muzzle of a brass eighteen-pounder, loaded to the throat with grape. There was a second's death-like pause; then the clear, calm voice of Captain Raymond shouted, as he sprang forward, pistol in hand:

“Down with the gunner!”

But he was too late. Even as he spoke, with a deafening roar it was discharged, dealing death through the densely-crowded pirates, cutting a lane right through their center. At the same moment a ball went crashing through the skull of the gunner, from the pistol of the pirate chief.

“For God and our country! Death to the pirates!” cried the crew of the merchantman, exultingly, as they sprang from their retreat, dealing death among the still astonished rovers.

“Slain the best man in my crew!” shouted the pirate chief, frenzied with rage, as the man Simon fell dead at his feet, warding off a blow aimed at the young captain’s life. “Follow me, men! No quarter to the murderers! Slay, and spare not!”

“*Death to the pirates!*” came defiantly back from the brave handful, who alone remained of the numerous crew of the Englishman.

With one concentrated yell of rage, the maddened pirates sprang upon them. The carnage—for such it now was—grew terrific; one by one, the crew of the English ship were butchered and cast overboard—a few crimson bubbles marking for a moment the spot where they had sunk, as they, one by one, disappeared forever. And, high over all, still arose the voice of Captain Raymond, with the death-cry of the Englishmen;

“*Death to the murderers!*”

Like one in some horrible trance, Kate stood with straining eye-balls, and face blanched to the hue of death, immovable as a statue, watching the fearful carnage. For the first time she realized they were really pirates, and *he*—whom, in spite of all, she had esteemed—he, the worst of all! Oh! the dreadful feeling of horror that filled her heart, and rooted her to the spot, as she watched him dealing death around.

“Hurra! hurra! hurra!” came exultingly from the pirate crew, as the last of the merchantmen were cast overboard.

Yes, they had conquered; but the victory was dearly bought. More than half their own crew lay dead and dying on the deck of the ship.

The pirates now began busily carrying their wounded companions to their own vessel, while the remainder employed themselves in transporting everything valuable from their prize. She proved to be the *Lady Mary*, of Liverpool, bound from Jamaica home, with a cargo of sugar, rum, and coffee, and a large amount of other valuables. These were quickly conveyed on board the *Water Witch*; and then, setting fire to the doomed ship, the pirates held on their course.

It seemed to Kate as though the whole affair was the work of a moment. The moonlight still fell as calmly over the waves as before; but the burning merchantman before her showed it to be but too dreadful a reality. Rapidly the fire spread on its devouring course, now licking its forked tongue around the tapering masts—now bursting forth here and there in different parts of the vessel—now shooting straight upward in a red, lurid column, and, anon, winding its deadly coils, like the folds of a serpent, around the ship. Suddenly, a bright, lurid column of fire shot upward, tinging the sky crimson; then followed an appalling crash, that seemed to rend the very heavens, as the magazine exploded. The pirate brig herself, though already hull down in the horizon, quivered and trembled in every joint, at the terrific explosion. The next moment the waves were flowing peacefully over the

spot where the doomed ship went down, as though death and destruction had never been there. The moonlight shone as calmly and peacefully over the bright waters as though they had never been dyed with human blood.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

“His voice is low—his smile is sweet—
He had a girl’s blue eyes :
And yet, I would far rather meet
The storm in yonder skies.

Great God ! the sights that I have seen
When far upon the main !
I’d rather that my death had been,
Than see those sights again.”

It was a pleasant afternoon, about a week after the event recorded in the last chapter. Since that fatal night Kate had carefully shunned the pirate captain, with a feeling almost of loathing. She knew now that those mournful blue eyes that had so interested her could light up with the fire of death—that low, musical voice could shout the death-cry of his victims. There was blood on his hand and death in his heart, and Kate could never feel toward him again as she had once felt.

It was evident that he noticed it, but it was equally evident that it troubled him little. There was an easy indifference—proud, yet careless in his manner toward her, that seemed to imply that though he felt bound to treat her as a lady, yet he was perfectly unconcerned as to what she might think of him

or his actions. His days were mostly spent in gazing idly over the side of the vessel, or chatting with his second in command—a young Spaniard, whose sinister look had from the first made Kate dislike him. As for her, she usually spent her days in the cabin, sometimes reading, and sometimes thinking of the dear ones at home. Here she had no one to disturb her reflections, for the quadroom generally passed the day upon deck, happy to be near the young captain when her rival, as she considered Kate, was out of sight.

But at night, lying awake on her restless couch, she would hear a light, firm footstep, pacing up and down the opposite state-room, occupied by Captain Raymond. Sometimes, too, in the clear, moonlight nights, when unable to sleep, she would steal on deck, and seating herself under the shadow of some projection, watch the tall, slight figure of the young chieftain, as he paced restlessly up and down the quarter-deck, unconscious of the eyes regarding him. Often, at such times, she would catch a glimpse of the shadowy form and wild, black eyes of the quadroom, as she crouched in some corner, watching and waiting with him she loved so, “vainly and so well.” Both were waiting and watching for what never came—waiting for the sun to rise on the dark night of their inner lives. For, spite of herself at such times, her heart would go out to those two—one wrapped in his hidden grief and remorse as in a mantle; the other waiting, so sadly and so patiently, in her deep, earnest love; but both waiting in vain. The bright hue of health was gradually fading from Syra’s dark cheek; the splendid Syrian eyes were fast losing

their luster ; a shadow lay on her darkly beautiful face ; there was a languor in her manner that showed how her strength was wasting, with the fierce fire within her passionate heart. Watching her, Kate would think of the words of the poet :

“ Love’s light has fled from her eye and cheek,
To burn and die in the heart they seek.
Alas ! that so often the grave should be
The seal of woman’s fidelity !”

And the grave was destined to be the seal of Syra’s, too.

But this pleasant afternoon, Kate had deserted the cabin for the deck ; and, leaning back in her seat, she watched, dreamily, the foam dancing in the sunlight, as the brig cut her way rapidly through the bright waves.

“ Sail, ho !” called the man at the cross-trees, in startling tones.

Captain Raymond, who was leaning idly over the side of the brig, smoking a cigar, now sprang into the rigging, and scanned the horizon in every direction.

“ I cannot make it out,” he said, hastily. “ In what direction is it !”

“ Standing to the eastward, sir ; another merchantman, I think.”

A feeling of sickness came over Kate, as she thought that the terrible scene before witnessed was about to be repeated.

“ Yes, yes ; I can see her plainly now,” said Captain Raymond, sweeping the horizon with his glass. “ Yes, she *is* a merchantman, most decidedly. We seem destined to meet

no other kind of vessels this cruise, Mr. Mondalvi," he added, turning with a laugh to his second in command.

"All the more the merrier, Senor Captain," said Mondalvi, in his peculiar, sneering voice, and strong foreign accent; "our swords are growing rusty in their scabbards for want of work."

"Call all hands on deck," said Captain Raymond.

Then turning, he walked over to Kate; he lifted his hat, and said, courteously, but with brief sternness.

"As I had some difficulty in making you go below during the last engagement, I must prevent your presence on deck *this* time; for, as you see, we are about to give chase to yonder ship, and an engagement will probably take place. Therefore, Miss Sidney, you will excuse me if I insist on seeing you to your cabin and locking you in. Sailors are proverbially superstitious, and my men consider your presence on deck during battle as an omen of ill-luck. Besides, scenes of bloodshed and death are hardly fitted for a lady's gentle eyes."

"Nor for the eyes of any civilized being are such scenes of murder fit—for it does not deserve the name of battle," said Kate, with spirit—"a gang of outlawed pirates to plunder the vessels of their own country, and murder the brave crews for defending them. *No!* such scenes are *hardly* fitted for civilized eyes!"

His eyes flashed and his face flushed hotly, as he bit his lip to keep down his rising passion.

"You are my guest, Miss Sidney," he said, after a pause,

“and as such are privileged to say what you please. But were it a man who had spoken thus, rest assured he should never speak again.”

Kate saw the struggle he made to suppress his anger and speak calmly; and, somewhat alarmed at her imprudence, she said, more calmly:

“I will go to the cabin myself; your escort thither is quite unnecessary. You may lock the door, if you please; but as I have no intention of leaving it, the trouble will be useless.”

“I shall not lock it; Miss Sidney’s word is sacred,” he said, lifting his hat politely, and stepping aside to allow her to pass.

Kate bowed coldly and haughtily, and descended to the cabin. Syra lay on the sofa in a deep sleep—that sleep resembling death in its profoundness, for which all of her race are so remarkable. Kate sighed as she noticed the smooth brow contracted, as though in pain, and the care-worn look on her beautiful features. Poor Syra! She loved, indeed, “not wisely, but too well.”

Sinking on her knees, Kate buried her face in her hands, to shut out, as it were, even from herself, the terrible vision of the approaching conflict. She knew by the orders given, and the sounds on deck, that they were rapidly approaching the ship; and, in trembling expectation, she awaited the opening of the conflict.

Thus an hour passed away, every moment dragging on like an age; and then the uproar of the battle commenced. Kate

sprang to her feet, with the strong, almost uncontrollable impulse to fly on deck; but the remembrance of her promise given to the young captain restrained her. Naturally fearless, and come of a brave, high-blooded race, it was with wild excitement that she paced to and fro the narrow limits. The noise awoke Syra, who sprang to her feet, with a wild shriek; but Kate, in her excitement, scarcely heard her.

Gradually there came a lull, and the thought, "They are boarding her!" flashed across Kate's mind. She was right. The pirates, like a swarm of bees, crowded on the deck of the merchantman, headed by their fiery young commander. Suddenly his eye fell upon the form of an elderly gentleman, who stood fighting bravely with a burly pirate. It was the Earl of Danemore—who, as the reader well knows, was bound for Cuba. The eagle eye of the young captain saw that he was fast sinking, though still fighting bravely, before the fast-falling blows of his younger and stronger opponent. Already the sword of the pirate was raised to deal the earl's death-blow, when, with a sudden spring, the young captain darted forward and struck up the weapon of the pirate. Then, springing on a gun-carriage, he raised a small bugle, which always hung at his belt, and blew a clear, loud blast. There was a momentary pause in the conflict at the sound, and then the voice of the pirate chief shouted:

"Back, my men! Let the conflict cease!"

Surprised at an order which they had never received before, but accustomed to implicit obedience, the savage pirates, in the very act of victory, drew back, and sullenly lowered their

reeking swords. Still more amazed, the crew of the merchantman awaited the result of this unexpected deliverance from death.

Approaching the earl, Captain Raymond touched him on the shoulder and said, sternly :

“A word with you, if you please, my lord !”

Thunder-struck that he should be known to the leader of a gang of pirates, the earl followed him to a retired part of the vessel, where they were screened from the view of the others. For a moment the two stood gazing in each other's faces ; then the earl said :

“Well, Sir Pirate, what have you to say to me, or how come you to know me ?”

For reply, the young captain took off his hat, and shook back the bright locks from his white forehead. Then, looking the earl full in the face, he said, quietly :

“*Do you not know me ?*”

For a moment the earl gazed into the proud, handsome face of the young rover-chief like one in a dream ; then, slowly, an expression of horror unspeakable came over his face ; his eyes seemed starting from their sockets ; his face grew ghastly, his lips bloodless, and with the piercing cry, “Oh, Heaven ! oh, heaven !” he reeled, and would have fallen had not the young captain caught him in his arms. Laying him gently on the deck, he turned to his men, and, waving his sword in the air, he cried : “Come, on !” and in another moment he was on the deck of his own vessel.

There was an expression on his face that made their hearts

stand still. They dared not disobey; one by one they followed their leader, and half an hour later they had left the merchantman far behind. Bewildering as it all was, they dared not ask the reason, for there was a look in the young captain's face that they had never seen there before. With a strange, frigid calmness, he gave a few directions to his second in command, and then, descending to his private room, he locked the door.

And all through that long night Kate heard that quick, restless tread she knew so well—up and down, up and down, without ceasing, the live-long night.

CHAPTER XIX.

JEALOUSY.

“ Ah! poor, unconscious rival maid.
How dreadfully must thou sicken and fade,
'Neath Jealousy's dark upas shade !”—*Tupper.*

THE good brig Water Witch was homeward bound. Day after day passed on, each bringing them nearer Old England, and with every day Kate's heart rose higher. She was heartily tired of the sea, and longed once more to stand in her native land, even though it should only be within the walls of the old Moor Manor.

To the pirate crew it evidently gave little satisfaction, as Kate judged by the low murmurs and angry oaths they indulged in when their leader was away, for they dared not murmur before him.

And he—a strange change had passed over him since the day he had encountered the Earl of Danemore on board the merchantman. A deep, settled depression, from which nothing could arouse him, had taken the place of the easy good humor which seemed natural to him—strange as it seemed in a pirate chief. Some hidden grief—or, it might be remorse—weighed on his spirit, coming not in fits and starts, as it had formerly done, but clinging to him like a garment. He no longer mingled with the crew—seldom speaking to them, save

to give some necessary order, and then again relapsing into gloomy silence.

The long, weary vigils and night-watches grew more and more frequent; and, night after night, that rapid, nervous tread continued, until Kate began, at last, to wonder if he ever slept?

“Remorse!” thought Kate—“the worm that never dies, yet God’s best gift to man, preys on his heart;” and, woman-like, with this conviction on her mind, she forgot, in her deep sympathy, his dark crimes. Let his guilt be what it might, he had, evidently, suffered for it, long and deeply; and sorrow goes far to atone for guilt. Then, too, the words of a certain good old book recurred to her mind: “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone;” and Kate, forgetting all, would have given worlds to remove the deep-settled sorrow from those dark, mournful, blue eyes.

So Kate no longer shunned his society, but sought it on every occasion—from no other impulse save the kind of diverting his mind from its settled gloom. But there was one on board who looked upon her changed manner in a far different light. Syra, blinded with jealousy, set it all down to *love*. Every word—every action of Kate or of Captain Raymond, was distorted by her half-crazed imagination, with still another indication of mutual love. Jealousy is Argus-eyed; not a word, not a look of either escaped her—all were cherished in her burning memory, adding fuel to the fire of her sleepless jealousy. Often sitting talking to Captain Raymond, Kate, on looking up suddenly, would see the dusky

form of the quadroon crouching in a corner, watching them with eyes of fire. There was something so fiendish in her beautiful countenance at such times, that a sensation approaching fear would cross Kate's fearless heart ; but only to be shaken off, as a childish fancy. Sometimes she would be on the point of striving to reason away those jealous fears, and show her how absurd they were ; but Kate Sidney, after all, had her faults, and predominant among them was an overweening pride. This pride it was which made her shrink from it ; she could not endure to place herself on an equality with one, who, notwithstanding her peerless beauty, was still a *servant*. She felt it would thus become a humiliation, and one which she had no idea of enduring. Besides, she shrank from speaking on this sacred subject to the passionate quadroon—dreading some fiery outburst of passion, all the fiercer from being so long restrained ; and, being no way romantic, she had a nervous horror of a *scene*. Thus the days passed on, dreary enough to all parties.

One night, feeling restless, Kate arose, and, throwing on a dressing-gown of white cashmere, went on deck. It was a delightful moonlight night, and, advancing toward her favorite seat, she seated herself and prepared to enjoy the delicious scene. The young captain was below, in his own state-room, and the night-watch alone kept the deck. Suddenly she started, to see lying prone on her face on the deck, her thin garments fluttering in the night-breeze, the slender form of Syra. Her attitude was one of such utter, abject woe, that, forgetting everything, save that she saw before her a

suffering fellow-creature, Kate laid her hand on her shoulder and said, softly :

“ Syra ! ”

Shrinking from her touch as though she had been stung by a viper, Syra sprang to her feet, almost shrieking :

“ Don’t touch me ! I *hate* you !—I HATE you ! ”

Kate forgot her fierce words, in the look of unutterable misery on her face, and answered, with grave kindness :

“ Poor girl ! why will you thus render yourself miserable ? What have I done that you should hate me ? ”

“ Done ! ” screamed the quadroon, her eyes blazing with rage ; “ viper ! serpent ! to ask what you have done. Have you not won *his* love, for which I would give my life and soul ? have you not come between me and the only being on earth I ever can or will love ? Answer me, vile-tongued traitor, have you not done this ? ”

Kate’s whole frame quivered with suppressed passion at the insolent words of the quadroon, who stood drawn up to her full height, her small hands clenched, her features convulsed, her great, black eyes blazing with rage and scorn. The sight calmed Kate, and she answered, after a pause, with calm dignity :

“ *No !* most decidedly and emphatically *no !* I have done *none* of these things. Neither would I answer the charge to any one but you ; it is absurd ; but *you* cannot see these things as they are—you are blinded and crazed by jealousy ! Therefore, I once again answer *no !* I have done none of these things with which you charge me. I could not stoop so

low!" And Kate's lip curled as she drew herself haughtily up to her full height.

"'Tis false!" screamed the quadroon, purple with passion, and raising her clenched hand, as though to strike her; "you know you speak false, you white-faced daughter of a cold-blooded race! But I swear by the God *you* worship that you will *never* be his bride—*never*!"

She hissed the last words through her clenched teeth with such concentrated rage that Kate was absolutely appalled. Recovering herself by an effort, she answered in the same calm, dignified tone in which she had spoken throughout:

"I have no wish to be, neither has he to make me his wife. I think that *you*, Syra, are much better fitted to be a pirate's wife than I am."

There was a slightly sarcastic tone in Kate's voice, which she could not control, that absolutely maddened the fiery quadroon. Glaring upon her like a tigress, quivering with rage, Syra was absolutely unable to speak with passion.

Kate noticed her convulsed face, and, unwilling to remain longer in so humiliating a position, she arose and moved with quiet dignity toward the cabin, saying:

"Good-night, Syra; I trust you will think over my words, and by quiet reflection come to a more reasonable frame of mind. Until you do, I will dispense with your services."

Before Syra could overcome her passion, Kate had entered the cabin, locking the door after her; for she felt that, in her present excited state, the quadroon might seek immedi-

ate revenge. And she was not mistaken. Had she not taken the precaution to secure her door, Kate Sidney would never have lived to see the sun rise again.

“Foiled?” muttered the quadroon, as she turned away from Kate’s door, and hid within her bosom a long, glittering knife. “Yes, foiled now, but not forever. The world is not wide enough to hold her and me ; one or the other of us will never live to see the land. *He* is lost to me forever ; I can no longer doubt it ; but the one he loves shall feel the weight of my vengeance.”

And gliding away, she resumed her lonely watch on deck ; but there was a wild, lurid light, like that of a serpent, in her black eyes, that betokened the smoldering fire-passion had at last burst into a fierce flame.

CHAPTER XX.

THE QUADROON'S REVENGE.

“ One more unfortunate,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death.”

It was a glorious moonlight night. One by one the stars came out, studding like diamonds the deep blue sky. Serenely calm, the lady moon sailed on her way, smiling as brightly on the deck of the pirate brig as on the most aristocratic mansion in Old England.

Kate Sidney sat in her favorite seat on deck, gazing thoughtfully over the brig's side, and watching the waves flashing like silver sheen in the moonlight. Standing beside her, silent and thoughtful, was Captain Raymond, seldom speaking save when addressed by Kate. And amid the shadows crouched the quadroon, watching them both with her burning, fiery eyes.

Since the night on which the interview on deck occurred, Kate and Syra had seldom met. Feeling that Miss Sidney knew her determination to have revenge, Syra had shunned her as much as possible. And Kate shrank from her, not with fear, but with a sort of involuntary dislike; so whole days often passed without their meeting.

But no word, no look or action of Kate escaped the jeal-

ous eyes of the quadroon. Argus himself seemed not to have more eyes ; every action was misconstrued, and however innocent, served to add fresh fuel to the already burning flames of her jealousy. There was a look a demon might have envied on her beautiful face, as she sat watching them now.

“ When will we arrive in England, captain ? ” said Kate, looking up, after a long pause.

“ To-morrow night if the wind holds as it is now,” he replied, quietly.

Kate sighed.

“ And then I must pass long, dreary months in that desolate old Moor Manor,” she said, with a sigh.

There was a moment’s silence, during which Captain Raymond seemed to be attentively watching the foam dancing in the wake of the brig, as she cut her way onward. Then, looking up, he said, suddenly :

“ Miss Sidney, during the last few days, I have come to the resolution of changing my mode of life. You look surprised ; well you may be, but it is even so. I am sick of scenes of blood and carnage. I have too long been a scourge to my fellow-men, and my career of crime has ended ; my last cruise is over. You shall be restored to your friends as soon as we arrive in England ; or, at least, as soon as my men can be out of the reach of the law, for wild and reckless as they are, they are attached to me, and have served me faithfully. There is not one of them, savage as they look, but would lay down his life for me. Therefore I must not consign them to the tender care of the hangman.

The amazement with which Kate listened to this speech may be imagined. She could scarcely believe her senses! In a few days she would again be free—would tread her native land a captive no longer. What a strange being this pirate chieftain was! She looked up to thank him; he stood gazing steadily with a look of fixed, settled sorrow and remorse that went to Kate's heart. Involuntarily, she laid her hand on his, and looking up in his face, said, earnestly:

“And you—what will become of you?”

He smiled slightly at her earnestness, and answered:

“Oh, it matters little. The sooner the world is rid of such a blood-thirsty monster as I am the better. But should I escape the gallows, I will seek America. In the New World, amid its boundless prairies and towering forests, I will try and forget the past. In that *refugium peccatorum* I may yet become a harmless member of society. There the crimes of the pirate chief may be unknown. There, under an assumed name, I will spend the remainder of my days. You see I do not fear to confide in you; you are the only one left in the world to whom I can speak freely. All has gone—friends, and home, and honor, and love!—all gone, all gone, and what remains?”

There was a bitterness and sorrow unspeakable in his tone. Kate's eyes grew dim with tears, as she turned away her head in silence. Yes, guilty as he was, her heart yearned toward him, and she longed to be able to remove that settled look of despair from those deep, mournful blue eyes.

“I don't know why my thoughts go back to the past so

strangely to-night," he said, dreamily, after a pause. "The present fades from view like a dream, and my boyhood rises before me—a vivid reality. Strange, strange! Things I have forgotten for years come back to me now with such singular force; faces and forms I will never see again stand beside me as in the days of long ago; voices that the grave stilled many a year ago are singing again the dear old songs I loved in my boyhood; words that I thought I had forgotten I hear again, and the touching promise. 'Though your sins should be red as scarlet, they shall become white as snow,' keep constantly sounding in my ears. My mother often used to read to me out of the book from whence it is taken. Ah, if she had lived, I might have been a far different man from what I am. The sun of my life, which I thought had sunk forever, seems to have risen to-night again. Strange that it should be so! Perhaps it is only to set in a darker night."

He leaned his head on his hand, while a sad, dreamy expression overclouded his handsome face. Kate was still silent; she knew not what to say. And after a few moments Captain Raymond turned away to give some orders to the men.

For nearly an hour longer Kate sat silent and thoughtful, gazing into the bright waters. She would soon be free—restored to her home once more, but, in spite of all, a deep depression had settled on her heart. A presentiment of some impending calamity weighed down her spirit—a feeling of dread hung over her. She strove to shake it off with the conviction that the desponding words of the young captain was the cause, but the effort was vain. And he, what an in-

comprehensible mystery he was!—noble and high-born, what could have changed him into what he now was? Kate sighed at her inability to solve the problem, and, rising, she prepared to go below. As she did so, Syra stepped from her concealment and stood before her. Kate almost shrieked as she saw her. Often before had she seen her almost frantic with passion, but *now*—oh, now! a galvanized corpse might have looked as she did, with just such livid features, bloodless lips, and glassy, glaring eyes. Shuddering with horror, Kate covered her face with her hands and retreated to the cabin, with the firm conviction that she was insane.

The quadroon stood gazing after her until she disappeared. Then turning away, she muttered:

“He will fly to America, and *she* will accompany him. No, never! To-night seals their destiny and mine. I shall make one last effort, and if I fail—*then* his sun shall indeed set, if I cannot be his here; I shall at least go with him to the world of shadows. Those eyes I love so well shall never look love on her again; those lips shall never breathe words of affection in *her* ear. Once I would have slain her, but now I am glad I failed. No, let her live; my revenge will be greater, whether I succeed or fail.”

She turned away as she spoke, and approached the spot where Captain Raymond sat. He looked up with a start at seeing the quadroon before him, with her deep, burning eyes, and her face looking ghastly pale in the moonlight. For the first time he noticed the change that had come over her of late. The rosy hue had faded from her cheek, the brown

hue of her skin had given place to a sickly pallor, the vivid light had died out of her eyes, and in its stead there was a fierce, lurid, light—the baleful brightness of jealousy; her step had lost its buoyant lightness, and she moved before him the shadow of her former self.

“Well, Syra! you here?” he said, looking up in surprise. “Is there anything the matter? Is your mistress ill?”

“No, my *mistress* is well,” said Syra, with a short, bitter laugh. “You need feel no anxiety about her.”

Captain Raymond looked at Syra, completely astonished at the tone in which she spoke. Absorbed in his own thoughts, he had not noticed her growing dislike of Kate, and was, therefore, quite at a loss to account for it.

“Perhaps you are ill yourself,” he said, kindly. “You look very pale. What is the matter? What can I do for you?”

The tone in which he spoke thrilled to her heart. He had never spoken so gently to her before in his life, and her heart throbbed high with hope.

“You can save me from death. You can render me happy forever. On you alone it depends whether I shall live or die.”

“*What!*” said Captain Raymond, looking thoroughly bewildered. “I do not understand you. *I* save you from death! You are crazed, poor girl!”

“I am not crazed. I speak truth. One word from you must decide whether I shall live or die.”

“Well, I confess this passes my comprehension,” said the

young captain, growing still more mystified. "Pray explain, Syra; I certainly have no intention of condemning you to death."

"You are going away; I shall die if you leave me!" she exclaimed, passionately. "I *cannot* live separated from you."

"What!" exclaimed her companion, thunderstruck with amazement. "Is it possible, Syra, that you——"

"That I love you? Oh, yes, yes, yes!" she interrupted, vehemently. "Oh, take me with you! I *cannot* live if you leave me!"

For a moment the young chief remained speechless with amazement at her words. Then a whole flood of circumstances rushed on his mind of which he had never thought before, but which tended now to confirm this startling truth. And startling it was to him; for he knew the fiery nature of the quadroon, and felt convinced her words were true. The change that had come over her of late was now accounted for. Very gently and sadly he looked on her as he replied:

"Impossible, Syra! You know I can never love any one. Scenes of bloodshed and death turned my heart to marble long ago. I can never love any one again."

"Oh, say not so!" she cried, throwing herself at his feet. "I cannot live separated from you. I will be your slave; I will obey your every command, only let me be near you. I will be no burden to you; I can bear suffering and hardship, and hunger, and fatigue, and danger joyfully, if only with you."

"I cannot, Syra," he said, sadly, moved by her wild entreaties. "You urge in vain. When I am far away you will soon forget this unhappy attachment. As for me, I can never love any one; you might as well set your heart on yonder moon, with the hope of winning it to return your passion, as me. Rise, Syra; leave me, and strive to forget what has passed to-night."

He extended his hand as he spoke to assist her to rise. She shook it off; and springing to her feet, exclaimed, passionately:

"I cannot, I *cannot*, I CANNOT. I will not leave you! I shall die here at your feet sooner than leave you! You must—you shall love me! Am I not fairer than her? Do I not love you a thousand times more! What is she, that I should be despised for her?"

"Of whom are you speaking, unhappy girl?" said the young captain. "I love no one *now*. Once I did; long, long ago, but she is lost to me forever. I can never love again. Go, you urge me in vain."

"I will *not* go," she cried, passionately. "I know it is for no one dead; but for the living you despise me! But she shall feel the weight of my vengeance—she shall never live to look on you again."

She turned away as she spoke, and darted toward the cabin. The whole truth flashed across his mind, as he sprang forward, and seized her by the wrist.

"Wretched girl, what would you do!" he exclaimed. "Would you murder an innocent girl who never injured you?"

“ *You love her !*” she said, hoarsely.

“ You are mad, girl !—mad with jealousy ! Neither Miss Sidney nor I ever dreamed of such a thing. I must confine you as a prisoner until we land, should you continue to act in this manner.”

“ And you do not love her ?” exclaimed Syra, with a sudden flush of joy.

“ Most certainly I do not.”

“ And she does not love you ?”

“ *No.*”

“ Swear it,” cried the quadroon, wildly.

“ By all the saints in the calendar, if you like !” replied Captain Raymond, quietly.

“ Then why can you not ? Oh ! *why* can you not love me, since you do not love her ?” she said, clasping her hands earnestly.

“ Because, as I told you, I am a man of marble. I pity you most sincerely, my poor Syra, and I shall always think of you with affection ; but more than that I cannot give. I have no heart to offer you. Can you not take the affection of a friend in its place !”

“ It will not do. Friend, forsooth ?” and she laughed, mockingly. See, I am kneeling to you—I, who never knelt to mortal before. Oh ! shall I, *must* I plead in vain !”

“ Rise, girl !” said Captain Raymond almost sternly. “ Why will you persist in this madness ? Is not once sufficient to tell you ? You ask an impossibility. Besides,” he added, in a softer tone, “ you only give yourself and me

pain. If I ever gave you any encouragement in this mad passion, believe me it was unintentional. I never dreamed of such a thing as your loving me. And now this interview must decidedly end; I cannot listen to another word. Neither prayers nor entreaties can move me. In a few days we part forever; and you, I feel assured, will soon forget me."

She rose to her feet, folded her arms across her bosom, and stood calmly before him. Every trace of passion had faded from her face, leaving her cold and pale as marble. All the fire and passion of her wild heart seemed to concentrate in her eyes, that glittered with a strange lurid light.

"And this is your final determination?" she said, calmly.

"It is," he answered, looking up in amazement at the sudden change.

"And can *nothing* change it? I ask you for the last time," she continued, in the same steady voice, and in a manner terribly calm.

"Nothing can change it. Why will you persist thus?" he answered, impatiently.

"*Die then!*" she shrieked, her whole manner changing, as if by magic, as she sprang forward; and, drawing a long, glittering knife from her bosom, she plunged it up to the hilt in his side.

The hot blood spurted up in her face; he reeled, swayed to and fro for a moment, and then fell without a cry, at her feet.

She bent over him, and pushed back the fair, clustering locks off his white brow. All was still. She laid her hand on his heart; no pulse beat there. She knelt down, and

pressed one long kiss on the cold lips ; the next moment she arose to her feet, and almost immediately a sudden splash was heard, as the waves closed over her.

The noise smote like a knell of death on the ear of Kate, as she sat in the cabin. She sprang to her feet, and ran on deck ; and here at her feet, bathed in blood, lay the apparently lifeless form of the young pirate chief ; while down, down under the bright waves the wild heart of the quadroon had found rest at last

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ROVER CHIEF'S STORY.

“ Weep for the love that cannot change,
Like some unholy spell;
It hangs upon the life that loved
So vainly and so well.

“ Weep for the weary heart condemned
To one long, lonely sigh,
Whose lot has been in this cold world
To dream, despair, and die.”—*Miss Landon.*

THERE was hurrying to and fro on the deck of the good brig *Water Witch*. As if by magic, the news that their beloved commander was slain, spread from lip to lip. All was confusion and disorder—discipline for the time was forgotten, and deep and loud were their curses on the head of the quartermaster.

Like one suddenly turned to marble, Kate stood by the apparently lifeless body. Calm and unmoved she looked, but oh! so pale and sorrowful! She alone, of all present, knew the tragical cause of his death.

“ Can he not be removed below?” she said, at length, turning to the second in command, the Spaniard, Mondalvi.

“ Call Danvers,” said the mate, without noticing the question. Then, turning to Kate, he said, by way of explana-

tion: "Danvers was a doctor before he joined us, and I should like him to see the captain before he is removed, if you have no objection."

Kate bowed slightly, and a moment after Danvers approached, and bent over the still form of the young captain.

"He has only fainted from loss of blood," he said, after a moment. "He is not dead."

"Can he live?" inquired Kate, eagerly.

Danvers examined the wound attentively for a moment, then, rising, he turned away in silence. It was evident from the expression of his face there was no hope.

"Nothing can save him," he said, in answer to the inquiring faces around him. "His voyage through life is over. He has arrived in port at last. Take him below."

The words fell like lead on the hearts of his hearers. Guilty and blood-stained as they were, they had learned to look with almost idolatry on their young, high-born, often careless, yet ever kind captain, and now he was gone. Had he fallen in battle, they would scarcely have grieved; but to die thus, by the hand of a woman—one, too, whom he had done so much for, exasperated them almost to madness.

Very gently Mondalvi and Danvers raised the bleeding form, and laid it upon one of the cabin lounges. Restoratives were applied, and at length he slowly opened his eyes and looked fixedly on them; then, as memory slowly returned, he passed his hands across his forehead, and groaned aloud.

“Where is *she*!” he asked, turning to Kate, who knelt by his side.

“Before her Maker!” said Kate, solemnly.

“Poor Syra! poor child!” he said, in a tone of bitter sorrow.

“Captain Raymond,” said Kate, earnestly, “you have but a few hours to live—think no longer of her, but strive to make your peace with Heaven.”

“Too late! too late!” he said, bitterly. “Can a few hours’ repentance atone for long, long years of crime and bloodshed? No. Speak not of repentance to me. My time for repentance came and went long ago. It is too late now. Heaven *cannot* forgive me; my crimes are past mercy.”

“What is man, that he should presume to question the boundless mercy of Heaven?” said Kate, almost sternly. “Has He who once forgave the dying thief on the cross forgot mercy? Remember the words you yourself repeated a few hours ago: ‘Though thy sins should be red as scarlet, they shall become white.’ The arm of the Lord has not been shortened since that promise was given to fallen man, and His mercy endureth forever.”

The young chieftian made no reply; he lay with his eyes shut, evidently struggling with bitter thoughts. Looking up at last, he said:

“My presentiment was true. Something seemed to tell me to-night my end was near. Listen now, and I will tell you my story. I once intended to die with it untold, but your words have changed my resolution. Send them away.”

Kate motioned Mondalvi and Danvers from the cabin, and, after closing the door carefully, she seated herself beside him, to listen, with feelings strangely divided with curiosity and pity.

For a few moments he lay with his eyes shut, as if lost in thought; then, fixing them on Kate, he began:

“I have told you before that I was not always what I am now. No; once I was the heir of broad lands and noble mansions in Old England, bearing a name as old as the conquest.

“My father was an earl—a domineering, passionate man. I had one brother some years younger than I, and differing from me in every respect. While we were still very young my mother died. Had she lived, what a different fate might have been mine! But everything, from boyhood upward, seemed to conspire to make me what I am. Well, fate has done her worst, and my career of crime has ended.

“From childhood I was passionately fond of hunting. While my brother was poring over his books I was away with my dog and gun through the woods. The consequence was what might have been expected. He grew up quiet, and steady, and learned. I, on the contrary, as I advanced in years, grew wilder, and ruder, and more reckless, caring more for one shot at a hare than for all the books that were ever printed. Still, dissimilar as we were in tastes and habits, I doubt if ever there were two brothers in the world more attached to each other. If I ever got into disgrace with my father (as often happened) by some mad freak, Harry in-

variably made peace for me. I often, by my carelessness, did much unintentional mischief, but on every occasion Harry found some means of getting me off with a very slight reproof.

“My father had at this time a hound of which he was exceedingly fond, his life having been saved by it on more than one occasion. One day, as I was out as usual with my gun, I espied something vanishing among the trees, which I hastily judged to be a deer. Without a moment’s hesitation I fired, and the animal fell dead, for I was an unerring marksman.

“I ran hastily up to secure my prize, when, to my surprise and terror, I discovered I had shot my father’s favorite dog. I stood for a moment rooted, as it were, to the ground—for I knew his anger would be frightful on learning his loss. Still there was nothing for it but to tell him the truth, and, resolving to brave the worst, I deliberately entered the house.

“On the way I met my father, and in a few brief words I narrated my unfortunate mistake. •Never shall I forget the fierce torrent of abuse he poured on my head. He absolutely foamed with rage, and, though my blood boiled at his words, I listened in silence. At last, blinded by rage, he struck me. Stung to madness, I rushed from the house, which I was never destined to enter more.

“I had been struck. It was an indignity I could not endure, even from my father; and I resolved to fly where no one would ever hear of me more. As I fled I met a peasant

boy about my own age and size. Anxious to disguise myself, and so avoid recognition, I urged him to exchange clothes with me. He willingly consented to give his coarse garments for mine, and the exchange was soon effected. I gave him half of my money at the same time, forgetting that money was not likely to be had for the asking in future. As I learned afterward, elated at being master of so much money, he got drunk, and was accidentally drowned the same night. My father, it appears, repenting of his violence, came in search of me, and, recognizing the clothes of the drowned boy, came to the conclusion that I was dead."

"Merciful heaven! gasped Kate, white with horror. "And you are——"

"Your cousin, Walter Alva, Lord of Arndale," was the reply.

"Oh, Father of Mercy!" exclaimed Kate, "and is it thus I find my long-lost cousin? Oh, Walter, Walter! Oh, my dear cousin!" and her tears fell fast on the face of the dying man.

He closed his eyes, while the convulsive twitching of his face betokened that he was wrestling with bitter thoughts.

"And you knew me all this time?" she said, lifting her pale face at last.

"Yes, I knew you," he replied, slowly, "from the night we met in the old Moor Manor; but I did not wish to shock you by letting you know your cousin was the leader of a band of lawless pirates."

"My poor Walter," said Kate, pressing his cold hand be-

tween hers. "How you must have suffered ere you came to this."

"Suffered!" he exclaimed, bitterly. "Yes, more than words can ever tell. There have been times when I have sat for hours gazing on the dark, troubled waves, and longing to take the fatal leap that would end all my earthly troubles at once, but the thought of the terrible hereafter held me back. Through all my long career of crime I could never shake off the memory of my mother's teachings, and the doom pronounced against the self-murderer alone restrained me. Thank Heaven, it was so ordained! It is a consolation I never expected—to have one who once loved me at my dying bedside.

"While my money lasted I passed my time pleasantly enough, roving from place to place. But money cannot last forever; and one night I found myself wandering through the streets without a farthing in my purse, or a place to lay my head.

"It was a terrible night—one that can never be effaced from my memory. The rain fell in torrents, and drenched me to the skin, while the raw, piercing north wind made my teeth chatter with cold. I had not tasted food since the evening before, and was too proud to beg. Worn out at last by hunger, fatigue, and cold, I felt inclined to lie down and die at once, when I saw a well-dressed gentleman approaching me. I was starving with hunger, and hunger got the better of pride; so I approached him, and, crimson with shame, I begged a trifle to buy bread.

“ He eyed me from head to foot, as though I were a thief, and with a gruff ‘ No, I have nothing for *beggars*,’ passed on. I stood as if rooted to the ground, overcome with mingled anger, hunger, and despair, when my eye fell on something bright lying at my feet. I stooped to pick it up, and, to my surprise and delight, found it was a guinea, which he had evidently dropped as he passed. Rejoicing over the treasure I had found, I hastened to the nearest public house, and called for supper. While I sat eating it, the gentleman entered, and inquired if a boy answering a description which he gave of me had passed, saying, he had stolen a guinea from him. The host pointed to me, displaying the guinea I had given him to pay the reckoning. The gentleman recognized it. I was accused as a pickpocket, tried, and condemned to twelve months’ imprisonment at hard labor.”

He paused, while the veins on his white forehead grew dark and swollen with his efforts to be calm. After a pause, during which Kate pressed her lips soothingly to his brow, he resumed :

“ That was the first thing that drove me to desperation. I was maddened—I was like one crazed for awhile, during which I was chained hand and foot like a wild beast. That I, the son of an English peer, a lord in my own right, should be thus condemned to mingle at hard labor with the vilest of the vile, nearly drove me mad. At times, I would fiercely struggle to free myself from my degrading chains, until, with my limbs wounded and bleeding, I would fall back in my hard bed. I wonder, now, I did not die or go mad then.

They fed me on bread and water, I who had all my life been pampered with dainties ; a handful of dirty straw I now lay on, instead of the beds of down to which I was accustomed. The gentle faces of friends were exchanged for the savage scowls of my jailer ; fierce oaths and horrible blasphemies took the place of pleasant words and joyous laughter. I longed and prayed wildly for death ; but it came not at my call. I was reserved for still greater trials.

“ At last I grew calm, and they set me to work with the rest. Oh ! the bitter, bitter days of unceasing toil which I then endured. My hands, delicate, and unused to labor, grew blistered and sore. The skin came off, but still I was forced to labor on. Often have I worked and worked, until everything I handled would grow red with blood, and still I dared not stop a single moment, even to rest.

“ Six months passed thus away, and I thought of nothing but escape. Night after night I employed myself in filing the iron grating of my window. At last, after weeks of unceasing toil and almost superhuman effort, I freed the window, and one dark night I made a rope of the coarse quilt of my bed, and ventured to fly. The rope was not long enough to reach to the ground ; as I allowed myself to drop, I fell heavily to the ground and broke my arm. Still I was not daunted, and, though suffering unspeakable agony from my broken arm, I ventured to mount the wall. I had nearly reached the top, when I was suddenly seized by the sentinel who had espied me, and captured once more. I struggled madly to free myself from his grasp, but in vain. He held

me as though in a vise; and at length, exhausted by pain and loss of blood, I fell fainting to the ground.

“When I recovered I found myself in the jailer’s room, and a surgeon bending over me, binding my arm. The next day I was taken before a magistrate, and accused of attempting to escape, whereupon his worship sentenced me to two years’ more imprisonment. I submitted to my fate with dogged indifference. Despair had succeeded my former madness, and I moved among my fellow criminals sullen and silent. I no longer thought of escape, and, even if I had, it was no longer in my power, for I was now carefully chained every night.

“Well, the two years passed away, and I was free again. There was but one desire left me now, and that was revenge. I determined on vengeance on those who had thus degraded me, and never did Corsican keep the vendetta with more fierceness than I. Had I wished to return home, degraded as I was, it was no longer in my power, for I was without money. As I wandered moodily along through the streets, hailed by the very children as I passed as a ‘*jail-bird*,’ I encountered a lot of half tipsy sailors advancing toward a public-house.

“‘I say, messmate,’ called one of them, ‘heave to there, and show your colors. Whose flag do you belong to?’

“I stared at him in silence, not comprehending his meaning.

“‘Ahoy, you lubber!’ shouted another. ‘Can’t you tell us whose colors you sail under? What port do you hail from?’

“ ‘ Newgate, I think,’ said an insolent fellow, who, passing at the moment had overheard the question.

“ My first impulse was to knock him down ; and the next moment he measured his length in the mud. A shout of applause from the sailors followed this, while the fallen hero bellowed loudly for the police. Half a dozen policemen came rushing up and fell upon me, whereupon the sailors fell upon *them*, and a general melee followed. With the determination of dying sooner than be imprisoned again, I fought desperately ; and soon, accompanied by my faithful champions, the sailors, I was on the deck of the good privateer Prince Edward.

“ The captain of the privateer urged me to sign indentures, which I complied with—thereby placing myself in the power of one of the greatest tyrants that ever trod a quarter-deck. I soon discovered that I had exchanged one kind of captivity for a worse. Still, knowing I was in his power, I strove to bear with what patience I could his ill-usage, and I had *learned* patience, I can assure you, in prison.

“ At last his tyranny grew absolutely unendurable. I was half-starved, and obliged to do the most degrading work. One day, having forgotten to do something—a mere trifle which he told me to do—he absolutely exceeded himself. I was ordered aloft, and one of the men was told to administer the ‘ cat ’ to my naked back. The man refused—for the men, with few exceptions, were warmly attached to me—whereupon the brute, frenzied with passion, ordered the kind-hearted fellow to be tied up along with me, and another man was or-

dered to apply the cat-o'-nine-tails to *his* back as well as mine. *And they did it.*

“I saw him tied up before my eyes, while they held me fast, and whipped until his back was one hideous mass of raw flesh. Then they took him down more dead than alive, and I was ordered up in his place. Ten thousand furies seemed in that moment to possess me. With the strength of a giant I burst from those who held me. A heavy marline-spike lay beside me. I seized it; and the next moment it went crashing through the skull of the monster. He never stirred again.

“The men, appalled by the awful deed and its consequences, seized me, and I was put in irons. I made no effort to resist. The fearful deed I had committed rendered me calm. I did not regret it; but the feeling that I was a murderer lay on my heart like lead.

“When the ship arrived in Liverpool, I was immediately given up to the authorities. I remember that trial for murder as though it had happened yesterday. The crowd of human faces, staring at me as though I was some strange, savage animal, is still vividly before me. And among the crowd I recognized *my father*. He did not know me; the sailor's dress, my bronzed features and fierce looks were very different from anything he ever knew of his eldest son; besides, he labored under the firm conviction that I was dead. He was speaking to one of the jurors, who seemed to have some doubts of my guilt; and I heard him say: ‘He is a murderer he deserves death—*hang him!*’ The words turned my

blood to gall. At that moment I vowed, if I ever escaped, to spare neither friend nor foe—all should feel the weight of my vengeance. *And I have kept my word.*

“The trial was over, and I was condemned to death. I heard my sentence with careless scorn, and listened with a levity far from edifying to the judge’s solemn address. I had paid no attention to the trial; strange as it may seem, I felt convinced I was in the hand of fate, and that my hour was not yet come. It was only when commanded to rise and receive the sentence of the court, that I awoke from a sort of reverie into which I had fallen, and heard the venerable judge, as he donned his black cap, and ordered me to be taken to the place from whence I had been brought, and from thence to the place of execution, there to be hung by the neck until dead, winding up with the usual formula; ‘And may God have mercy on your soul.’

“ ‘Thank you, my lord; much obliged for your kind wishes,’ said I, with a bow.

“A look of indignant horror from the judge, and a half-repressed smile from the crowd, followed this. I was removed to prison, there to await the sentence of the law.

“The day on which I was to be executed, arrived, and hope began to desert me. Every attempt to escape had been prevented by my being closely ironed; and I began to think that, after all, I was born to be hanged.

“The fatal hour arrived at last. The sheriff and his companions entered my cell; my irons were knocked off, and I was marched to the scaffold. An immense crowd had as-

seemed to see me make my exit, and I saw at once by their faces that public opinion was in my favor. A groan of disapprobation arose as I appeared. I heard it, and at the same moment, my eye fell on the sheriff's horse, standing right below the scaffold.

“In a moment my resolution was taken. Turning to that functionary, I told him I desired to speak a few words to the crowd.

“The request was granted. I leaned forward as if to address them, when suddenly I leaped from the scaffold right on the horse's back, darted through the crowd, that involuntarily opened right and left; and before they had recovered from their surprise at this audacious act, I was on the king's highway. Turning in the saddle, I gave a cheer of defiance; and then urging my horse onward, I dashed away at a break-neck speed.

“The insulted dignitaries of the law did not long remain inactive. I was hotly pursued, but I was a desperate man, and I distanced them all. My horse, luckily, proved to be a splendid animal; and after passing through countless adventures and hair-breadth 'scapes, I found myself wandering, a hunted fugitive, in the old manor, near the home of my childhood. It was a stormy night. I had no home, and I resolved to spend the night in the old manor, and brave the ghosts which I had heard from my infancy, were its sole occupants.

“I threw myself on the floor and fell fast asleep. Here I was found by some of the pirates, who even then held it as

a place of rendezvous. It required little argument to make a desperate man join them. I soon grew attached to their wild, free, roving life; and at the death of their leader, I was unanimously elected to his place. The Water Witch and her pirate crew soon became the terror of the high seas. Rewards were offered for our capture, but we only laughed at them. With our fast-sailing brig, and picked crew of desperadoes from all quarters of the world, we feared them not.

“Sometimes, by way of change, I left the brig in charge of Mondalvi, and in various disguises sought adventures on land. It was on one of these occasions I encountered Syra and her grandmother. I bought them both; and they ever afterward, until this last fatal cruise, remained in the old Moor Manor.”

He paused for a moment, as though nerving himself for what was yet to come. Kate held a glass of water to his lips. He drank it off eagerly, and then resumed:

“And now I come to the most eventful—to the saddest part of my dark history. That part which I would to Heaven I could forget!

“During one of these intervals, while seeking adventures on land, I stopped at a little village in the south of France. My assumed name of Captain Raymond was too well known; and as I had plenty of money to support the character, I resolved to adopt that of an English baronet. Accordingly, as Sir Walter Percy, I became the one great man of the village.

“One day, the second after my arrival, was a holiday among the good people of the village. It was the feast of

some saint, and a public procession was to take place. I have never seen a prettier sight. All the young girls in the village dressed in white, and, crowned with flowers, went first, holding in their hands lighted tapers, and chanting the litany of the Blessed Virgin. I only gave them a passing glance, when my eye fell on a face the most beautiful I have ever beheld. I have traveled since through many a land; I have seen the languishing beauties of Italy, the dark-eyed donnas of Spain, the fairy-like beauties of America; but never one so lovely as she. I will not attempt to describe her to you. I am inadequate to the task; suffice it to say, that one glance imprinted her image forever in my heart. During the service that followed the procession I never removed my eyes from her face as she stood before the altar, her hands crossed meekly over her pure bosom; her eyes fixed on the floor, with the long, dark lashes resting lovingly on her oval cheeks. Once, in the pause of the hymn she was chanting, she raised her dark eyes, and meeting mine fixed so ardently upon her, they fell again, while the hot blood mantled cheek and brow.

“I was not long in discovering who the fair girl was. Her name was Madeline Desbreaux, an orphan, residing with her grandmother, an old woman named Sorreaux. Madeline’s parents, it seems, had at one time been wealthy, and had given their daughter an education far above that of her companions. At their death, her grandmother took her to reside in her cottage, and here, at the age of sixteen, I first saw Madeline.

“ I need not pause to tell you how our acquaintance progressed. Suffice it to say, we both learned to love each other. I with all the intensity of an impulsive nature, and she with all the passionate *abandon* of a hot-blooded child of the sunny South. The old woman, Wail, however, from the first, looked on our increasing intimacy with an unfavorable eye. She evidently concluded, that if I was what I professed to be, my intentions respecting her grandchild could not be very honorable; and if I was *not* what I professed to be, why then her child must look to be the wife of an honest man.

“ But little either Madeline or I cared for her objections. With the trusting, confiding nature of her sex, she gave her heart into my keeping only to be wrung and broken. Little did either of us think, when arm in arm we strolled through the moonlight, I pouring my tale of passion into her too willing ear, how fatally it was destined to end for us both !”

He paused again, while a half shudder ran through his frame.

Kate wiped the death-damp off his brow in silent sympathy. When he again resumed, his voice was low and tremulous.

“ Why need I linger over this, why need I repeat the old story of vows never fulfilled—of a fair brow stamped with the brand of a Magdalen—of a broken heart, and shame hidden, perhaps, in the grave. Oh, wretch that I was ! Oh, Madeline ! Madeline ! lost to me forever !”

He groaned aloud, and the tears of his companion fell fast on his pale face.

“ I dare not linger over this ; it maddens me even now, to think of it,” he went on, rapidly, after a short pause, “ suffice it, that I was awakened from my brief dream of happiness by a visit from Mondalvi to tell me the men refused to obey him longer, and urging me to depart immediately. I dared not refuse, yet how could I leave Madeline? I knew she would fly with me willingly, but I could not tell her she had been wooed by an outlawed pirate instead of a noble peer. Neither dare I trust myself to bid her farewell—her tears and entreaties might prove stronger than any resolution—and I was forced to depart without bidding her adieu. We have never met since.”

“ Did she die?” asked Kate, for the first time breaking silence.

“ I know not. A few months after, I returned to the village, but she and her grandmother were both gone. I felt I could not live without her, and I returned to tell her all, and then, if she could forgive me, to make her my wife and go with her somewhere, and, unknown, under an assumed name, to give up my reckless life. But I came too late ; both was gone. I was almost wild at the news. Everywhere I made inquiry, but in vain. All I could learn was that she had secretly fled from the village first, and that old Wail had sold her cottage soon after, and followed her. Since then I have never been able to discover the least trace of either of them.”

The name struck Kate as familiar, and the recollection of old Mother Wail, the Witch of the Moor, flashed across her mind. Could they be one and the same person? With it

came the recollection of her wild prophecy on the night of the ball: "*I see here danger, and sorrow, and shame, and disgrace, and, it may be, death. There is danger to yourself near at hand; sorrow for some one near you at present; shame for one, the proudest here to-night; disgrace to the house of Danemore, and death either for you or for some near relation.*"

It had come true, that strange, wild prophecy, And then came the remembrance of the strange agitation of Lady Danemore at seeing her. Could she be *his* Madeline! It was her name; she was French by birth, though adopted by an English lady, and she was certainly lovely enough to justify his praises. Had the father wedded one who should have been the bride of the son? How else could she account for her mysterious sorrow? Kate's brain grew giddy with the multitude of thoughts that flashed across it, and she pressed her hand on her heart to still its tumultuous beatings.

Suddenly he reached out his hand and took hers. She looked up; the grayness of coming death had fallen on his face.

"I am going," he said, faintly; "*pray.*"

And Kate *did* pray, though in a voice choked by tears. He held her hand in his, and gazed steadily in her face. She could see nothing save the earnest gaze of those great, mournful blue eyes.

"It is growing so dark," he said, absently, his mind beginning to wander, "and so cold! Madeline!"

Kate's voice faltered, then totally gave way, as her tears fell fast on the pale face,

He lay with his eyes closed for a few moments, then fixing them earnestly on her face, he said :

“ Pray.”

Choking back her tears, she complied. Gradually, as she proceeded, her voice grew stronger, as she sent up an earnest petition for mercy.

The restless look faded from his face as he listened. Slowly his hand relaxed its grasp of hers, the deep, melancholy blue eyes wandered eagerly for a moment around, as though in search of some one, then a slight convulsive shudder passed through his frame, his lips parted, but no sound came forth ; his eyelids swayed heavily, and then closed—and he was gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FATHER'S REMORSE.

"I would not rudely lift the vail
Of thy unhappy lot—
How can I see thy cheek grow pale,
Thy brow with anguish fraught—
When told that all thou held'st most dear
Death's grasp hath rudely riven.
Oh, may it to thy view bring near
The lasting joys of heaven."

MORNING dawned gray and gloomy over the old Moor Manor. In the subterranean chamber formerly occupied by Kate, lay all that was mortal of the young pirate chief. The restless look that his face had ever worn in life was gone, and he lay like one in a deep sleep. The fair luxuriant locks were brushed off the high, white brow, and a half smile still lingered around the faultless mouth.

Kate, pale and worn, with eyes dim with weeping, moved gently through the apartment. Crouched in a corner, swaying her body too and fro, and humming a dreary kind of chant to herself, was poor old Aunt Moll. In a few brief words Kate had told her all, expecting an outburst of grief for the loss of her granddaughter, but she was mistaken—her sorrow was all for her young master; for Syra she seemed not to have a thought.

During the night previous the brig had come to anchor, bearing the body of their young chief, together with Kate and Mondalvi, who had now succeeded to the command. Kate gave them to understand in a few words that she knew his history, and they were at last willing to consign his remains to her care. After conveying him to the old manor they took their last look at the death-cold form of him who had once been their chief. Before daybreak the brig was once more far upon the sea.

And now, what was she to do next? Kate paced up and down the room, and tried to think.

“Go to Dirritole,” seemed ever ringing in her ear. But, oh, how *could* she go?—how could she tell the earl the terrible tale?—how tell him that his eldest son was the dreaded rover chief!—how tell him that he had driven him to this terrible end? And the countess, if she were the Madeline of her cousin’s story, how would she hear of his tragical end? Kate wrung her hands in hopeless trouble—turn which way she would, everything seemed dark and gloomy around her.

And so the day wore on, and noon approached. Something *must* be done. Go she must—there was no alternative; and Kate Sidney was not one to shrink from any duty, however painful it might be.

Turning to the old negress, who still sat rocking her body backward and forward, and humming to herself, Kate said:

“Aunt Moll, I must leave you for a while. You will not be afraid to remain here a few hours by yourself, will you?”

“Laws! no, honey, I skeered!” said the old woman, without looking up.

“You’ll be sure to stay here until I return, will you not?” said Kate, somewhat anxiously.

“Sartin’ I will, honey. Laws! who’s ’fraid? I ain’t skeered o’ ghosts, nebber was, nudder. Jes’ you go ’long, I’ll tender things till yer gets back.”

Reassured by the old woman’s tone, Kate quitted the manor; not, however, without first entering the great dreary chamber, where Alice had been detained a prisoner. It was empty. A handful of ashes and a half-burnt log yet lay in the huge fire-place. On the floor were scattered the various articles left by the earl in his haste—but *where was Alice?*

With a sigh, Kate turned away—everything seemed to grow darker and more drear the longer she thought of it.

It was growing dark when she came within sight of the tall trees and peaked gables of Dirritole. What strange events had taken place since she had left it last!—what wonderful discoveries had come to light! It all seemed like a troubled dream to her now; but, alas! she could not long think it a dream—it was too stern a reality.

Quiet and dark Dirritole ever looked; but it seemed stiller, and quieter, and sadder now than ever. There was something almost mournful in the low whine of recognition with which the shaggy house-dog welcomed her.

With a sinking heart, Kate entered the hall. She dreaded to meet unannounced any of the family, fearing the effects of a sudden surprise. As she stood hesitatingly, thinking

over what plan she had best pursue, the dining-room door suddenly opened, and the prim housekeeper, Miss Dickett, made her appearance, brush in hand.

As her eyes fell on Kate, she dropped her brush, and, throwing up both arms, uttered a stifled scream. Well might she exclaim at seeing Kate before her—so pale, so thin, so sorrowful-looking—the mere shadow of her former self.

“Hush!” said Kate, in a hurried whisper, “make no noise. Come with me, I wish to speak to you.”

Mechanically, Miss Dickett followed her. She had always been accustomed to obey Miss Sidney; and even now, though she believed it was Kate’s ghost she was following, she did not resist. Kate closed the door, and, turning to the housekeeper, demanded, in an agitated whisper:

“How is—how are the family? Are they all here now?”

“Oh, lawk! Miss Kate, *his* it you, or *his* it your ghost?”

“Ghost! no—what nonsense!”

“Then hit *his* you!” exclaimed Miss Dickett; “well, I *is* glad and no mistake. Oh, law! I thought I’d never clap my two heyes on you again—so I did.

“Well, never mind that at present!” said Kate, impatiently. “Can you not answer my question?”

“Well, hit’s all very fine—so it is!” said Miss Dickett, placing her hands on her sides and drawing a deep breath, “but *sich* a place as Dirritole’s turned out to be of late I never seed. Fust, Miss Halice she goes hoff with ’erself somewhere, where nobody can’t find ’er hout. Then *you* goes

hoff without hever tellin' nobody; and then tne hearl *he* takes hisself hoff 'long with the rest. Mr. Chawles he goes back to that nasty Dublin, which I can't abide no ways, 'cause it's so wulger—though I ain't a saying nothink agin his goin', 'cause he was allers a makin' 'sturbance while he was 'ere. Then Miss Maggie, the imperant little thing, she follers him; an' I'm blessed if I wasn't glad to be rid of *her*, allers a takin' *me* off. Madame Maria, she's allers sick hup stairs, and won't 'low nobody to 'tend to her 'cept 'tis that nasty old nigger, which I can't abide no ways—so I can't. My lady won't speak a word to nobody 'cept that conceited little furriner, Bess L'Olise, while she was 'ere; but she's gone, too, 'long with Miss Maggie, hoff to Hireland. Lord Harn-dale comes streakin' down here, and then tears hoff agin like a comet, lookin' everywhere 'cept, I s'pose, in the right place, for Miss Halice. And 'ere *I*'s left like a poor, hold, singed cat, with nobody to look arter me if I went to hold Scratch—so there!"

Kate listened impatiently to this tirade, and now she broke in with:

"You do not mean to say that my uncle and all are away, do you?"

"Well, he ain't away now, 'cause he's 'ome!" said Miss Dickett, "he 'rived last night, and now you follers him. Mebbe the rest'll come bime-by, and things'll begin to look as they used to."

Kate paced rapidly up and down the room for several minutes, then turning to Miss Dickett, she said, inquiringly:

"And has no news been received from Miss Alice yet?"

"Law! me, not so much as a single scrape o' a pen. Hit's wery curis, so hit his—but deary me! there hisn't no countin' for ladies' notions nowadays."

This was followed by a significant look, as though she intended Kate to understand, she considered *her* "curis" as well as Miss Desmond. But Kate was paying very little attention to her, being absorbed in her own painful reflections. Could it be that the earl had carried Alice off with him somewhere else? It must be so; else how could she account for her sudden departure with the two servants from the old Moor Manor. Passing her hand over her brow, as if to dispel her sad thoughts, she turned to the old housekeeper, who stood watching her, with mouth agape, and said, briefly:

"Go, and inform the earl that I have arrived, and wish to see him immediately. Break the news as carefully as possible, so that it may not take them by surprise, and make haste."

Miss Dickett quitted the apartment, and again Kate resumed her nervous, hurried pace up and down. How, oh! *how* should she break the fatal news to him—how tell him of the disgrace that had fallen on his honored name? And *she*, her aunt, how would she hear it, if the Madeline of her cousin's sad story?—this must be the key to her secret sorrow—and how would she learn that he whom she had loved "so vainly and so well," lay now cold and dead in the old Moor Manor?

"The earl says for you to walk right up," said Miss Dickett, putting her head in at the door.

Kate's heart throbbed so loudly, that she grew faint. Recovering herself by an effort, she ran up stairs, and entered the room where the earl and the countess sat.

The meeting was a cold one on all sides. The earl, convinced that she knew of his villainy, felt particularly uncomfortable, but still not as he once thought he should at such a meeting. Since the day when he recognized his long-lost son in the person of the pirate chief, a marked and visible change had passed over him. His hair had grown snowy white, deep furrows were marked on his forehead, he walked stooped and feeble, as though a sudden load of grief had been laid on his shoulders—an old man before his time.

Convinced that the hand of Heaven was on him in punishment for his misdeeds, he had resolved to seek Alice on his return, seek her forgiveness, and brave the scorn of the world. To his surprise and horror he learned, on his arrival, that nothing had been heard of either her or Kate.

Accompanied by Lord Arndale, to whom he disclosed all, they searched, as they imagined, thoroughly the old Moor Manor, but all in vain. No trace of either could be found. And now the earl, though surprised and rejoiced at the return of Kate, felt secretly uneasy at the power she possessed over him.

As for Kate herself, all her feelings of just indignation gave way, as she saw the change the suffering and sorrow had made in him. She could only remember that she was

about to add a still greater load to what he already evidently suffered.

My lady lay back among the cushions, in the weary, listless manner of other days. No change has passed over her, as coldly, serenely beautiful as ever, with the long, black lashes sweeping her pearly cheeks, and vailing the large, mournful, dark eyes.

She looked up, and with a faint smile of welcome, extended her hand. Kate raised it to her lips, respectfully; she might have greatly erred—but had she not likewise greatly suffered—and sorrow goes far to atone for sin.

There was a moment's silent constraint on all sides. Then, determining to learn the fate of Alice, first of all, Kate looked fixedly up in her uncle's face, and said, with brief sternness:

“My lord, before I tell you the business which brought me here at this late hour of the night, I would first learn what has become of Alice Desmond.”

He groaned aloud, and turned away his head.

“Good Heaven!” exclaimed Kate, horror-struck at the thought which flashed across her mind, “*is she dead?*”

“I know not,” answered the earl, vehemently, “as God liveth, I know not. Whether she is living or dead I cannot tell.”

White with fear, Kate stood listening with clasped hands. She could not doubt his words—she felt convinced he was speaking the truth.

“But, why—how—did you not find her *that night* in the old manor?” she asked, in a bewildered tone.

“I did. I found out likewise you had been there; and maddened at the discovery which I saw must take place, I determined to prevent it. I had found another hiding-place for Alice, but wishing to be rid of the servants first, I took them to a place of *safety*. When I returned, the old manor was empty. Alice was gone. I know nothing of her. I cannot discover her. Whether she is among the living or dead, I cannot tell. Arndale is now in search of her. Heaven grant he may be more fortunate than I!”

Kate sank on a seat, and covered her face with her hands. All was for the moment forgotten, save poor Alice. The earl had risen to his feet, and began pacing the floor rapidly up and down.

Suddenly remembering what was yet to come, Kate took her hands from before her face, and said, in a voice that trembled in spite of all her efforts to render it firm:

“My lord, you remember, you *cannot* have forgotten poor Walter!”

There was a passionate exclamation from the earl. My lady gave a slight start, her hand was involuntarily half raised, and then dropped heavily in her lap.

“Forget him! Oh, Walter! Walter!” he exclaimed bitterly. “Speak, girl! what of him?”

“You thought him dead—we all did,” said Kate, speaking very rapidly, “but we were mistaken—he was not drowned.”

He did not exclaim or seem amazed, as she thought he would. He only groaned, and wrung his hands in bitter sorrow.

"He lived, my lord," went on Kate, huskily, "but driven to despair, he—he—" her voice faltered.

"Became a pirate! I know it! I know it! I know it!" he broke in, passionately. "He disgraced his name, he has brought shame on his family, he has whitened my hairs, and brought me with sorrow almost to the grave."

"My lord! my lord!" said Kate, rising, "speak not thus. Whatever his crimes may have been, he has atoned for them by death. Your son has gone before a higher tribunal than any of earth to be judged."

"*Dead!* Walter dead!"

He seemed stunned, bewildered, dizzy, like one struck by some sudden blow. He reeled into a seat, and sat gazing vacantly into her face.

And my lady—a shadow, like the shadow of death, had fallen on her white face; her arms lay heavily by her side, as though the power of life had been suddenly stricken from her heart.

"How? when? where did he die?" asked the earl, brokenly, looking in Kate's face, with a look of hopeless bewilderment.

Briefly, in a voice choked by tears, Kate related all. The story of her capture—of Syra—of her jealousy—of his tragical death—and his dying story. Only one part was kept secret—that relating to Madeline. The dark eyes of the countess met hers toward the close with a look of gratitude, as if silently thanking her for her delicacy.

He listened like one in a dream to the close. Still he sat

gazing in her face with oh! such a look of utter, utter, hopeless trouble.

“My lord—my dear uncle,” said Kate touched in spite of herself by his silent anguish, “grieve not! It is better so—he could never be happy here. Let us hope he is at rest!”

“Dead—dead!” he said, slowly. “Walter dead. So young, so fair, so noble-hearted! dead, and by the hand of an assassin!—*dead!* and it is I who have driven him to this—I drove him from home—I struck him—I forced him to become an outcast on the face of the earth, without where to lay his head—friendless and homeless, he grew desperate. And now he is *dead!* Oh, Walter! Walter! Oh! would to Heaven I had died for thee—my son—my son!”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WITCH OF THE MOOR.

“ Lady dear ! this history
Is thy fated lot,
Ever such thy watching,
For what cometh not,
Still thou seekest on, though weary,
Seeking still in vain ;
Daylight deepens into twilight,
What has been thy gain ?
Death and night are closing round
All that thou hast sought unfound.”—*Landon.*

THERE was silence for a few moments, deep and profound. Kate was weeping silently, the earl wrung his hands in hopeless anguish ; my lady still sat immovable, gazing steadily on the floor—a gray shadow, a sort of dead white, lying on her pale face.

Starting suddenly to his feet, the earl exclaimed, vehemently :

“ Why do I sit here ? Where is he, lead me to him. Oh, Walter, friendless and alone, you have lived, and shall not kindred hands lay you at least, in the grave ? ”

“ He is in the old Moor Manor,” said Kate, rising and ringing the bell, “ we can reach it in a few hours.”

The old Moor Manor ! the very name fell like a curse on the stricken ears of the earl.

“Bring around the carriage, immediately,” said Kate, to the servant, who entered.

The man hastened to obey. Lifting her eyes from the floor, the countess fixed them on Kate’s face, and said, quietly :

“Ring.”

Wondering a little, Kate obeyed. A spruce waiting-maid answered the summons.

“Bring me my bonnet and shawl,” said the countess.

“My dear aunt,” exclaimed Kate, in surprise and distress, “you surely do not intend to accompany us. Do not, I beg of you.”

Without answering her, the countess turned to the girl, and said, steadily :

“Bring me my bonnet and shawl !”

The girl left the room to obey. Kate knelt beside her, took her hand, and said, imploringly :

“Dear Aunt Madeline, I *beseech* you not to go. Think of the long, uncomfortable ride to the Moor, the fatigue you must necessarily undergo, and after all, of what use will it be? Pray, *pray* do not go?”

She did not reply ; but fixing her eyes again on the floor, seemed lost in thought.

At this moment the girl entered with the things, followed by Miss Dickett, to announce the carriage was in waiting.

The countess arose, and motioned the girl to approach. Seeing she was still determined, Kate wrung her hands in hopeless trouble and exclaimed, vehemently :

“Oh, Aunt Madeline! why *will* you persist in this? My lord, can *you* not persuade her to stay?”

“It is useless,” said the countess, firmly, “I *must* go. Come.”

She held out her hand. Kate, with a sigh, drew it through her arm, and, followed by the earl, entered the carriage. The next moment they were whirling rapidly away.

Of what were those three thinking as they sat side by side, silent and sad? The earl’s thoughts wandered back to that wild, tempestuous night, a few short months before, when, amid all the storm and gloom, they had approached the fatal old Manor.

How many and how strange were the events that had taken place since then. The scene was almost the same. Outside all was dark and dreary; inside two women were his companions, just as they were that night. He almost fancied that night had returned. The countess lay back in the corner, just as Alice had done; and he almost fancied he saw poor, poor, injured Janie in the erect figure and stern, sad face of Kate. But, oh! how different—how very, very different was his errand to-night! His eldest son, his first born, lay cold and dead in the old Moor Manor.

And Kate—her thoughts were divided between her cousin and Alice—wandering sometimes to the wild, passionate quadrone. Poor lost Syra! What a sad fate had been hers. And then Walter and Madeline, what a meeting for these two, so long and sadly separated! She glanced toward her, but she could read no trace of thought or passion in that

white, calm, marble-like face, and veiled eyes. Of what was she thinking? Perchance of one whose blue eyes had once been dearer to her than all the world besides, of that strong, fearless heart, whose every throb had been for her, until death had stilled its pulse.

They drew up at last before the old Manor. They alighted, and, preceded by Kate, entered the secret passage that led to the subterranean chambers.

Here they found everything just as she had left it. In a shadowy corner lay the lifeless body of the earl's son. Old Moll sat over the fire, still humming to herself her dreary chant, and rocking to and fro in her trouble.

The countess, who had borne up during the journey, nearly sank as she entered the gloomy room. She tottered, and would have fallen, had not Kate supported her; and leading her gently toward the inner apartment, she removed her bonnet and laid her on a couch. The long, black ringlets fell in heavy masses over her shoulders, making her colorless face seem still whiter and wanner by the contrast, as she lay as still and motionless as one dead.

Leaving her, Kate passed to the outer room. The earl stood bending over the lifeless form, with a countenance of utter, utter despair. Kate came and stood beside him and gazed down.

How calm and quiet he looked, resting there! Death had left no ghastly imprint on his countenance, the quiet look of repose betokened that he had passed away almost without bodily pain. Who could dream that the calm, white brow

had often frowned *death* to others—and those lips, wreathed with a half smile, Kate could hardly realize that she had heard them shout the death-cry of his countrymen.

The earl pushed back the fair, bright locks, almost fancying he slept. The eyelids were closed so naturally over the blue eyes that it was hard to realize he was indeed dead. But the heart would never throb more—the deep, dark eyes would never open again.

“He *cannot* be dead!” exclaimed the earl, wildly. “Walter! Walter! Wake! it is your old father who calls! Oh, Kate! will he not speak again?”

“Oh, my poor, poor uncle!” said Kate, compassionately, “you cannot deceive yourself. It is better as it is. Better he should die thus, than live to suffer by the hand of the law.”

The earl groaned in his anguish, and wrung his hands. Then sinking into a seat by the bedside, he took one of the cold hands in both his, and continued gazing steadily and mournfully into the face of the dead.

Kate moved noiselessly thorough the apartment, now whispering a few words of consolation to poor old Moll, who still sat on the floor clasping her knees with her hands, and droning drearily to herself—now gazing pityingly on the earl, and again flitting softly into the inner room, where the countess lay. She seemed not to have moved from the position in which Kate had laid her. An involuntary feeling of awe stole over her as she gazed into that death-like face.

She looked like a shadow herself, too, fleeting silently

among shadows. So sad, so pale, so care-worn, she looked very different from the happy, careless Kate Sidney of a few months before.

So the hours passed on, and midnight approached. Midnight! strange, solemn hour, when the great world seems for a moment to pause to take breath—when the veil that separates the living and dead grows thin. Strange, mystic hour, when all is hushed and still—when the dark past rises before our eyes with fearful power.

There was a sudden noise, as of footsteps without. Kate's heart stood still with fear; then the door was thrown open, and Mother Wail, the Witch of the Moor, stood before them. By the hand she held the child Magdalen, who stood gazing around with great, wondering dark eyes.

All sprang to their feet in dismay. For a moment the old woman's eyes wandered around the apartment, then rested on the lifeless form extended in the farthest corner. Going over, she folded her arms across her breast, and stood gazing down into the calm face of the dead, with a mocking smile of triumph on her lip.

“So,” she hissed, at last, between her clenched teeth, “the farce is over—and he who left here full of youth and health, has returned a corpse. It is well! Said I not, lady,” she added, turning to Kate with a jeering smile, “that disgrace hung over the house of Danemore, and that the viper its master had warmed into life, should be the first to sting him. Yet, methinks, there is one wanting to complete this assembly. Where is *she*? where is the Countess of Danemore?”

Kate's eyes involuntarily turned toward the inner room. The old woman noticed it, and dropping the hand of Magdalen, she said, imperiously, "stay here." The next moment, she had raised the curtain, and was standing in the presence of the countess.

All had passed so quickly that Kate was bewildered. Now, however, she strove to prevent her entering; but she was too late, the old woman was already face to face with Lady Danemore. Trembling for the consequences, Kate darted in after her. Mother Wail stood gazing on the countess with the same bitter, jeering smile on her face. And the countess, she had half raised herself on her elbow, her large, black eyes glaring wildly into the hideous face above her, her lips a livid blue; she strove to speak, but a choking gasp was the only audible sound, to which she could give utterance.

"How *dare* you enter here, wretched old hag?" exclaimed Kate, passionately; "leave the house instantly! By what right dare you presume to enter here?"

"*Might* is right," said the old woman, with a mocking laugh; "did I not dare you once in your proud halls to force me out. I repeat it now, force me out if you dare!"

A gleam of lurid fire shot from her sharp black eyes as she stood gazing defiantly in Kate's face.

The indignant blood throbbed and beat in Kate's heart and temples. At any other time she might have forgiven her this intrusion, but *now*, forcing herself into the sacred chamber of death, with such defiant insolence, roused her indignation almost beyond endurance. A passionate torrent of anger

arose to her lips, and it was only the recollection that she was speaking to an *old* woman that restrained her.

“Well, why do you not force me out, most angelic young lady,” said the hag with a mocking sneer.

“Woman—leave the room,” said Kate, sternly, speaking calmly, by an effort.

“Shall I, Madeline?” said Mother Wail, in the same sneering tone, turning to the countess.

Her only answer was an imperious gesture for Kate to leave the room. Surprised and anxious, she obeyed, and Lady Danemore and the Witch of the Moor were together.

“Your *husband's* friends don't seem to welcome *your* relations very warmly, Madeline,” said Mother Wail, with a sardonic sneer—wonder if *Sir Walter Percy's* would not have treated your grandam more kindly.”

“What has brought you here?” said the countess hoarsely, keeping her glittering eyes fixed, as if fascinated, on the repulsive face of the old crone.

“A singular question,” was the sarcastic answer. “Why should I not come to comfort my granddaughter, on the death of her lover. The face and form are as faultless still, Madeline, as when he made a fool of *you*.”

Still the fixed, steady gaze of those gleaming black eyes. Even the callous old witch grew uneasy under their fixed, unaltering stare.

“*Why have you come here?*” she repeated in the same low, hoarse tone, that gave little indication of the fierce passions rending her heart within.

“You shall hear,” exclaimed the old woman, her whole

manner changing to one of exultant, passionate fierceness "I have come to fulfil my vow. Come to disclose your history to those you have so long deceived, come to let him see in her true colors the viper he has cherished so long. *Your child and his who now lies dead* is without, and all shall be revealed this night. What more fitting time than when all are assembled beneath the same roof? How little did you think, Madeline, when you laughed at my warning, and called me a 'doting old simpleton.' that it would come to this! How little did you dream when you parted from him who deceived you that this would be your next meeting! Did I not tell you you would live to rue the day you disobeyed me? Did I not tell you I would follow you to the uttermost bounds of the earth to avenge the disgrace you brought on a before unstained name? Have I not kept my vow? Have I not pursued you? Have I not followed you like your shadow over the world? Have I not wrung your heart? Have I not held *your* child for years, and refused all your prayers to let you see her? Have I not been avenged? Look up and tell me, Madeline?"

She laughed a harsh, discordant laugh, as she ceased speaking, but in spite of herself, her eye quailed before the steady gaze of those magnetic black eyes. Not once did they falter in their calm, fixed look while she spoke. As Mother Wail ceased, she rose to her feet, slowly, and with calm dignity.

"And *this* is your errand?" she said, slowly. "I thank Heaven that the time has come at last. Go, tell them all; once I feared it, but the time has passed. I fear you no longer. Come, I shall assist you."

She pushed aside the curtain as she spoke, and passed out. Little Magdalen stood still where the old woman had left her, in the middle of the floor. The countess approached, parted the raven curls from her broad, white brow, and gazing steadily into the deep, dark eyes, fixed wonderingly on her face, she murmured to herself :

“ How like ! how like ? ”

Then, pressing a kiss on the fair brow, she raised her eyes and calmly encountered the gaze of those around her.

“ My lord,” she said, turning to the astonished earl, “ this woman has a communication to make in private to you and your niece. Believe all she tells you, it is all true. I will watch by the dead until your return. Go in there.”

She pointed toward the inner room. Mother Wail was about to object, but there was a sudden flash in the eye of countess that warned her she would not be refused.

The earl was on the point of asking an explanation, when Kate, who guessed what was coming, laid her hand on his arm and drew him with her.

Mother Wail turned to follow, first taking Magdalen by the hand to bring her with her ; but the countess interposed, laying her hand on the child’s head.

“ She will stay with me,” she said.

Mother Wail did not object. There was something in the face of the countess she had never seen there before. Muttering to herself, she followed the earl and his niece. Kate drew the curtains, and in silence seated herself to listen.

CHAPTER XXIV.

UNITED AT LAST.

'She loved but her bosom had buried the dart,
And there, while she strove to conceal it,
Its point had engraven his name on her heart,
Too deep for her lips to reveal it;
But now not a trace of the name can be found;
With darkness and silence hung o'er it,"
The sacred engraving is hid in the ground,
Laid up in the bosom that bore it."—*Miss Gould.*

THERE WAS silence for a few moments within the room. The earl sat gazing in silence, first at the old woman and then at Kate, awaiting impatiently the solving of this mystery.

"What does all this mean?" demanded the earl at last, turning to Kate. "What has this old woman to tell us? What could my lady mean?"

"Old woman!" repeated Mother Wail, bitterly. "You had better speak more respectfully, my lord, of the grandam of the Countess of Danemore."

"*What!*" exclaimed the earl, indignantly; "what means this insolence, audacious old hag? *You*, her grandam, forsooth! You had better be more chary of your words, or you will presently find yourself talking to the outer walls of the Moor Manor."

"My lord, calm yourself," said Kate, hurriedly, seeing the angry flash of the old woman's eye. "I have reasons for knowing what she says is true."

"Impossible!" exclaimed her uncle in amazement. "Lady Danemore the grandchild of the old Witch of the Moor! It cannot be!"

"It is even so, dear uncle," said Kate, soothingly; "remember my lady told you to believe all this old woman said. I assure you it is true."

"Go on—go on!" said the earl, shading his eyes with his hand. "What strange events are taking place to-night?" he muttered to himself.

"If I cannot convince you *now*, I am her grandmother," said the old woman, "perhaps you will believe me before I have done."

"My name is Wail Lorreaux; I am French by birth—having been born, brought up, and married in a little, sunny village in the south of France. That part of my history, however, does not concern you, so I will briefly pass over it.

"I had one child, a daughter; as fair a maiden as ever tripped the music of the castanet. At eighteen she was wedded to one above her in rank and station, who had been brought to her feet by her exceeding beauty. They had but one child, a daughter, called Mandeline, now Countess of Danemere."

She paused, and cast a triumphant glance toward the earl, who still sat with his face shaded by his hand. He made an impatient motion with his hand for her to proceed, and after a pause, she went on:

“As I said, her father was rich, and Madeline was brought up and educated like a lady. But before she reached the age of fourteen her father was suddenly killed, and her mother did not long survive him. Madeline was thus left an orphan, with no one to take charge of her but me. True, there were her father’s relations, but they would not notice her, as her father had grievously offended them by marrying one so far in rank below them. So I took Madeline to my own cottage, and in time learned to love her, almost passionately. But there is only a step between love and hatred, as I soon found out.

“When Madeline was about sixteen, there came a gay young English nobleman to our village. He called himself Sir Walter Percy; but, though his words and bearing were those of a prince, still, from the first, various little things—trifles in themselves—made me suspect he was not what he pretended.

“From the first, Madeline and he grew attached to each other. Every day saw him at our cottage, reading to her, and telling her tales of far off lands; while she would sit, and listen and listen, as though there was no one else in the world save himself. Oh, Heaven! how the girl loved him! She worshiped him; while he, the son of a cold-blooded race, sought her society because she pleased him—because, like a spoiled child, he wanted a new toy!

“Some secret feeling told me, from the first, how it would end. I scolded, I threatened, I pleaded, I coaxed; but all in vain—she was infatuated. She only laughed at me, and

called me an old simpleton for my pains ; yet I bore it all patiently, for I loved her.

“ Day after day passed on, and she grew still more infatuated. How often, in the long pleasant evenings, have I watched those two—he lying at her feet, playing the guitar, and singing love ditties, and she playing idly with his long, fair locks. *Ma foi!* the girl was love-crazed. I think she would have died for him, had he wished it.

“ Well, it all ended as I foresaw it would. Poor, simple fool! she really dreamed he loved her ; while he, without even bidding his victim good-by, left the village as secretly as he had entered it.

“ After that, I forgot she was my grandchild ; I could only remember that she had brought disgrace upon my gray hairs. A child was born—”

“ It is false—false as foul !” shouted the earl, springing madly to his feet. “ Hag—fiend in woman’s form—I will tear the lie from your perjured heart !”

She looked up in his face, with a calm, mocking smile.

“ Did *she* not tell you to believe me !” she said, quietly.

“ She did ; but I will never believe such a terrible lie. My lady *never* was the degraded thing you would have me believe !”

“ My dear lord,” interposed Kate, “ it is hard to believe, but nevertheless it is so. Do not, I beseech you, give way to violence thus.”

“ You, too, against me,” said the earl, hoarsely ; “ you, too, trying to make me believe this accursed story ? Woman,

woman! where is this Sir Walter Percy—who is he, that I may send his craven soul groveling to perdition?"

"Behold him in the dead body of your *son*!" said Mother Wail—her withered countenance growing almost demoniacal, with its expression of fiendish triumph.

"Oh, Heaven!" groaned the earl, sinking back, and burying his face in his hands, in utter despair.

"Shall I go on?" said Mother Wail, her callous heart touched, in spite of herself.

"Yes," said Kate, with brief sternness.

"A few weeks after the birth of the child," went on the old woman. "Madeline, taking it with her, fled one night from the village. I had driven her to it by my unceasing taunts and reproaches, and it was but natural, for many reasons, she should wish to leave the village, where she was a mark for the finger of scorn to point at. But I did not, I would not, think of pity; neither would the villagers. It was in vain that our good old cure, who had loved Madeline from a child, repeated the words of the Saviour, 'Neither do I condemn thee—go, sin no more.' I only thought of having my revenge for the disgrace she had brought upon me. I sold my cottage and furniture, and set out, determined to find her, though I should be obliged to wander the world over. I was confident of success; but in spite of all my endeavors, three months passed away, and I had obtained no clew to her whereabouts.

"At last I determined to go to Paris. It seemed hardly probable that Madeline would go to that great city, unknown,

poor, and friendless, but I knew not where else to go. I obtained lodgings, and set myself diligently to work to find her.

“One day, as I was passing the store of a fashionable milliner, a piece of exquisite embroidery caught my eye. Madeline had been educated in a convent, and the nuns had taught her to work beautifully. It was the only kind of work she had ever been good for, and I immediately recognized it as a piece of work she had finished before she fled from the village, and which I knew she had taken with her.

“I stepped into the store and asked the milliner of whom she had bought it, saying I had a particular and most urgent reason for wishing to know.

“The woman, however, could give me but little information; a young, and as she imagined, pretty woman had brought it, with several other pieces, there to be sold; and, as she worked beautifully, she had engaged her by the week to work for her.

“Of her personal appearance, she could only say she was very pale, and quiet, and lady-like, with splendid eyes, and always dressed in deepest mourning—a young widow, madame imagined, as she often brought a baby with her.

“I had learned enough to satisfy me that it was Madeline; and, having learned the day she was expected, I determined to watch. Accordingly, I stationed myself where I could see all who entered madame’s, without being noticed myself; and very soon had the satisfaction of beholding the milliner’s pretty ‘young widow’ in black enter.

“I knew her immediately, although she was closely veiled.

When she quitted the shop, I followed her, and having discovered the house where she lodged, I returned in triumph to my own apartments.

“The next day, disguised as a beggar, I visited the house, and by a few artful inquiries learned that the pretty lady in black, as she was called—for no one knew her name—always left her baby in charge of a little girl, a daughter of the landlady, when she went out. Satisfied that my object, which was to steal the child, could be easily accomplished, I waited with impatience for the arrival of the day on which she was to visit the milliner with her work.

“It came at last, and, when she was out of sight, I went boldly up to her apartments, and told the girl that the ‘pretty lady,’ who had gone to the milliner’s, had sent me for her baby. The girl gave up the child without hesitation. As I wrapped little Magdalen—for so Madeline had named the child—in my cloak, I turned to the little girl:

“‘Tell the pretty lady,’ said I, ‘when she comes, that *Mother Wail* came for the baby. She may like to know.’

“The girl promised, and I quitted the house. All the money I possessed in the world was in my pocket. I went down to one of the piers. A ship was there just ready to start for England. I took passage on board, and in a short time the shore of France was lost to view.

“I could speak a little English; for Sir Walter had, by Madeline’s desire, taught her; and, listening to them, I had learned, too. I determined to support myself as a fortune-teller. I knew there were always plenty of fools in all large

cities who will eagerly pay any one to tell their fortunes—more particularly a foreigner. I possessed a pretty thorough knowledge of human nature ; and, as I could easily read the simpletons who resorted to me in crowds, I was able in many cases to come pretty near the truth, and soon acquired in London a wide-spread popularity and fame as a fortune teller. Serpents, snakes, magic mirrors, lanterns, skulls and cross-bones, and all sorts of strange and mystic things likely to impress superstitious minds filled my rooms. I soon grew rich ; for the noblest and wealthiest in the land showed themselves to be as great fools as their inferiors, and came in crowds to consult Mother Wail, the witch, as I was called.

“So seven years passed on. During that time I had never heard of Madeline or Sir Walter, and I knew not whether they were living or dead, when one day, passing down a fashionable thoroughfare, I saw a splendid equipage, which I instantly guessed to belong to some noble, come dashing down the street. Turning to a passer-by, I inquired whose it was.

“My eyes!’ said the man, looking at me in surprise. ‘You must be green not to know whose that is. It’s the Earl of Danemore ; and there’s my lady sitting in it, the handsomest woman in England.’

“I eargerly pressed forward, anxious to see one who could justify this eulogium, when the carriage suddenly stopped. I looked up, and judge of my surprise to see in it, dressed magnificently, and looking more beautiful than ever, my granddaughter, Madeline Desbreaux.

“I staggered back, thunder-struck at the sight. Recovering myself, I turned to the man, who, with a crowd of others, had stopped to gaze upon the splendid turn-out, and inquired :

“ ‘ Who is that lady ? ’

“ ‘ Why, granny ! it’s the *Countess of Danemore* ! ’

“As he spoke the carriage started, and in a moment was out of sight. I turned and walked home with mingled emotions, which I cannot attempt to describe. When last I had seen Madeline she was a poor sewing-girl, and now a *countess* ! What a change ! How had it occurred ? I thought, and thought, till my head grew giddy ; but all was in vain.

“I soon discovered that Dirritole was the family mansion of the lords of Danemore, and thither I determined to go. I was tired of life in the city. I had money enough to last me for the remainder of my life, and I determined to quit it forever. The moor was lonely and unfrequented, and it was near enough to Dirritole for my purpose. Here I had a cot built, and here, with Magdalen, my brave dog, Death, and my fierce cat, Imp, I removed.

“I was ever on the alert ; night and day found me watching, and I soon discovered that the old Moor Manor had inmates. I could follow a trail as surely and as stealthily as a North American Indian ; and with the cunning and secrecy of a serpent, in spite of all their precautions, I found out the secret entrance and the character of its inmates ; but judge of my surprise to discover in Captain Raymond, the

rover chief, the betrayer of my grandchild, Sir Walter Percy.

“What new discoveries was I to make? I felt sure there were more to come yet; and I was not disappointed.

“One night, I learned there was to be a great ball given at Dirritole by its master, to honor the arrival of his niece. I had not yet seen Madeline; but I determined to go that night, and the more to overwhelm her with shame and surprise, to confront her in the presence of her new and aristocratic relatives.

“Taking Magdalen with me, as soon as it grew dark, I started. The servants were all busily running to and fro, and I entered the house unnoticed.

“Stealing up stairs unnoticed, I determined to reconnoiter. I passed through various rooms, all brilliantly lighted, but in an opposite end of the mansion from that in which I knew the guests were assembled. Suddenly I found myself in the picture gallery. Yes; there hung Madeline’s portrait, paler and sadder looking than of old, but even more beautiful; and beside it hung another that made my heart stand still. It was that of a bright, handsome, noble looking boy, every line of whose handsome face was perfectly familiar to me. Underneath was the name: ‘*Walter, eldest son of Lord Danemore.*’ I recognized it instantly. In him I beheld Sir Walter Percy *alias* Captain Raymond, the pirate chief.”

A stifled groan came from the white lips of the earl; but without appearing to notice it, Mother Wail went on:

“I was stunned, bewildered by this new discovery.

Taking Magdalen with me, I determined to learn what I could of this new mystery; and concluding that the servants were the best to apply to, I met a pert looking chamber-maid, and having told her fortune, and promised her a rich husband, by a few artfully put inquiries, I learned the history of the fate of the earl's eldest son.

"I was now perfectly convinced that he and Captain Raymond were one and the same person. Full of the important secret I had so unexpectedly learned, I entered the drawing-room, and appeared among the guests. What followed you know. I stood before Lady Danemore; she recognized me; shrieked, and fell senseless to the ground. The earl attempted to force me out; but I had a claim on *him*, too. I knew the secret of his prisoners in the old Moor Manor, and he dared not put his threat in execution.

"I felt perfectly sure that Madeline would immediately visit me. I was not mistaken; the next night, accompanied by a little French girl, she came to me in my hut on the moor. There I learned from her her history. After the loss of her child, she was for awhile quite delirious—for she thought I would kill it; but fiend that I was, I could not do that. When she recovered, she came to England. Why she had done so, she could not tell. She had no idea I was here. Some secret feeling she could not resist forced her to come—perhaps the hope of meeting her lover, whom she still loved as passionately as ever. But she never saw him more. Shortly after her arrival, a rich, childish, old lady, a Mrs. Rochfort, met her—was struck by her youth and singular

beauty ; and learning she was an orphan, poor and friendless, adopted her, with a sudden impulse of generosity, as her own child.

“ Here she lived for some years ; and here the Earl of Danemore met her, and fell deeply in love with her at first sight. He urged her to marry him ; so did Mrs. Rochfort, and Madeline consented. She told me that, at the death of Mrs. Rochfort, she knew she would be left utterly destitute and friendless ; she wanted a home—a place of rest for the remainder of her days. She did not dream *then* that he was the father of him whose wondrous beauty had first ensnared her girlish heart, and whom she still idolized ; for Madeline is not one who can love twice. Well, she was married ; a strange bridal it must have been, wedding the father, when she should have been the bride of the son.”

Oh, Heaven have mercy !” came from the ghastly lips of the earl.

“ Her husband brought her home to Dirritole. And there she beheld *that* picture. Like me she knew it instantly ; and then who can know how she felt when she knew she was the wife of the father of him she so well and vainly loved ? She heard his story, too—heard he had been drowned, and knew in her heart that he still lived.

“ That night Madeline—always so cold, so proud, so haughty—humbled herself on her knees before *me*—me, whom she had once despised in her heart. Her husband had been the kindest of husbands to her ; she did not, could not, love him ; but she felt grateful to him, and would not for worlds

link his name with hers in disgrace. She implored me on her knees not to let the world know her history—not for her own sake, but for his. She begged, and wept, and prayed, as only a mother can, to see her child once more—*only* once—but she pleaded in vain. My heart was like steel, and *I refused*. I thought she would have died that night. The agony she suffered *almost* touched *my* heart—even mine, harder than iron.”

She paused for a moment, and wiped the great drops of perspiration off her furrowed brow. All the events of that fatal night flashed like lightning through Kate’s mind, as she sat white and speechless with pity and horror. The earl still lay motionless, his head bowed on his hands, like one suddenly stricken with death.

“I have but little more to tell,” went on Mother Wail, rapidly. “You know now, my lord, the history of your wife. Her child and that of your son is with her in the outer room. I shall resign her to you, as I am about to quit England forever. I made a vow to be revenged; I have kept it, and my task is ended. I know I have done wrong. I am almost sorry for it now; but it is too late for useless regrets. Forgive your wife, my lord. The world knows not of her history; and if suffering and sorrow can atone for her sin, hers has been forgiven long ago. The dead and the living alike have been to blame; but oh! my lord, a life of sadness and suffering has been the lot of each, and now, at last, shall they not be forgiven?”

“You—you to speak of forgiveness, you monster in woman’s

form!" said the earl, hoarsely, rising and confronting the old woman, with glaring eyes and ghastly face. "You, who showed mercy neither to helpless infancy nor suffering womanhood; you, who exulted in the agony of your victims, you, who pursued them even to the threshold of death with unrelenting vengeance; *you* to talk of mercy and forgiveness! Oh, my son, my son! Oh, my wife! my long-suffering, heart-broken Madeline! Oh, wretch! monster! tigress! leave my sight before my tongue is tempted to curse your gray hairs!"

"Uncle! uncle! for Heaven's sake, calm yourself; remember we are in the presence of the dead!" said Kate, throwing her arms around his neck, and making an imperious sign for the woman to go.

"I obey you, my lord. I deserve all you have said. In a few days I shall be once more in my native land. I shall see you again before then."

And wrapping herself in her cloak, with a softer light in her eyes than had shone there for many a day, she silently quitted the old Moor Manor forever.

"My wife, my wife!" exclaimed the earl, wringing his hands, unconscious of what he was doing. "Oh, Kate, how that brave, strong heart has suffered, watching and waiting all those long years for one who came not! To be parted from each other in life, and only to meet thus at last! Oh, Madeline! Madeline!"

He paced the floor wildly in his bitter sorrow.

"Shall we not go to her?" said Kate, as her tears fell

fast. "Will you not tell her with your own lips she is forgiven?"

"Yes, yes! I have nothing to forgive; but let us go, my poor, poor wife!"

He leaned on Kate's arm, for excessive emotion had made him weak as an infant. They reached the outer room and approached the bed of death. The child Magdalen stood at the foot, gazing with her great mournful black eyes on the face of her dead father.

And kneeling by the bedside, her head resting on the cold bosom of the dead, her long black hair streaming wildly over the pillow and over his bosom, lay my lady. She did not look up as they approached. As immovable as a marble statue she knelt.

"Dear Aunt Madeline!" said Kate, taking her cold hand.

She moved not—spoke not. Kate raised her head; all was cold and still. She looked down in the white face—the beautiful features were fixed and rigid; the mournful dark eyes were closed forever. My lady was *dead*!

And there, on the bosom of him she loved, her spirit had departed. They had gone together—those two so strangely separated in life, so strangely united in death!

CHAPTER XXV.

REUNION.

“ Sprinkle sweet blossoms o’er her
Low and quiet grave;
She was aye a gentle flower;
Do not let a willow bower
O’er her ashes wave.”—*J. W. H.*

“ MY LORD,” said Kate, gently and sadly, “ she is dead.”

He stared like one bewildered, but spoke not.

“ She needs not your forgiveness now; all her earthly troubles are over. She is at rest,” said Kate, earnestly taking his hand.

“ Dead! Madeline, Walter—all dead!”

He looked bewildered.

“ Not all, dear uncle; there are many still alive to love you. And this child, *theirs*, will you not love her for the sake of the dead? Come here, Magdalen,” said Kate, turning toward her.

She came quietly forward and stood beside them.

Kate brushed back the long, black ringlets, and her eyes filled as she met the large, sad, beseeching, dark eyes—so like, so like those whose light was quenched forever in the darkness of death.

“ Poor child, poor little one!” she said, kissing fondly the

fair brow. "Oh, uncle, see how much she is like those who have gone!"

He looked down in the sweet, childish face, and, strong man as he was, his head fell on her shoulder, and he wept.

"Don't cry. I love you," said Magdalen, suddenly throwing her arms around his neck, with the usual impulse of childhood to comfort all who weep.

The outburst of grief relieved his surcharged heart. He was able to look up and listen to Kate, as she proposed that the lifeless forms should be conveyed to Dirritole and privately interred in the family vault there.

He silently assented. The carriage which had brought them was still in waiting, and before noon the lifeless forms lay side by side in a darkened, white-draped room at Dirritole. Old Moll and little Magdalen were there, too. The faithful negress refused to leave the chamber where lay all that was mortal of her once kind master. She crouched in a shadowy corner, her arms clasping her knees as she rocked too and fro, still chanting to herself her dreary dirge. Shy and silent Magdalen sat by herself, watching wistfully the many figures that glided past her, silent and noiseless, like ghosts.

We pass over the astonishment and grief of the household at hearing of the death of their fair young lady. Marie Nelson fell into hysterics at the news, and kept every one in the house generally in a state of confusion.

Pale, and still at the head of the bed of death sat the earl, gazing steadily and mournfully into the faces of the dead

They were such a contrast, those two lifeless forms before him, bound together in life and death so strangely. He, so fair, so calm-looking—she, so dark, yet beautiful, with the look of fixed sorrow she had ever worn in life yet resting on her face. He sat and gazed, and gazed—as though there were nothing in the whole world besides. And to him, what was left?

Kate had written to Lord Arndale immediately upon their arrival, detailing with brief yet simple pathos the whole sad story from beginning to end.

Before night he arrived, and the two brothers who had once loved each other so well were beneath the same roof once more. How different—how widely different had been their paths through life! Tears which did honor to his manly heart, fell from the man's eyes as he gazed.

Night again had settled down another time. In the chamber of death were assembled the earl, Lord Arndale, Kate, Magdalen, and Old Moll, when suddenly the door was thrown open, and Mother Wail, the Witch of the Moor, stood again before them. A slight, girlish figure stood behind her. She advanced; all sprang to their feet, their hearts beating wildly; her cloak fell off, and springing forward, panting and almost senseless, Alice Desmond lay on the bosom of Lord Arndale.

“Said I not I would come again!” said the old woman, quietly.

“Alice! Alice! can this be real?” exclaimed Kate, like one bewildered, while Lord Arndale could only fold her still

closer in his arms, as though doubting the evidence of his senses.

"Dear Harry!" said Alice, raising her soft eyes to his face. "Your father—I must speak to him."

He opened his arms silently. She glided forward, and stood beside the earl, who sat white and motionless beside the dead form of his wife.

"My lord, said Alice, gently, "I forgive you for the past. Shall we not be friends in future? In the presence of the dead all should be forgotten and forgiven."

"Forgive me," he groaned, "and after all I made you suffer? Ah, Alice, you are indeed avenged!"

"But how—what does all this mean?" demanded Lord Arndale, impetuously. "How came you with this woman, Alice? How came you to leave the old Moor Manor?"

"She did not leave it," broke in Mother Wail, calmly. "I took her away. You see, my lord," she added, turning to the earl, "I watched you that morning, and saw you taking off those two servants bound and gagged in the carriage. I suspected something wrong, and determined to remove Miss Desmond. Accordingly, after you had left, I entered and found her lying senseless on the floor. I raised her in my arms, for she is light as an infant, and I am still strong, and carried her to my hut. I judged when you missed her search would be made, and I accordingly took measures to prevent you from finding her. Taking a hint from the old Moor Manor, I had when my cottage was constructed an underground chamber constructed, and when you visited my hut I

hid Miss Desmond there. That is all. I have brought her back to you ; I have told her all that has transpired, and you see she is still willing to forgive you. And now farewell. Before daybreak I shall be far on my way toward *la belle France*."

She turned and quitted the apartment. There was a moment's profound silence, and then Kate said :

"But all this time I have not learned why you carried Alice off, uncle. She went with you voluntarily, yet against her will. It seems strange."

"It is easily explained," said the earl, "and with the rest of my evil deeds, shall be explained. In the first place I owed her father a grudge this many a year, and being evil by nature, I resolved to pay it off. Secondly, Alice was poor, and I wished Arndale to marry Lord Netterville's daughter, whose fortune was immense, and whose broad lands would then be joined to those of Danemore. These, and other considerations, made me wish to get her out of the way, for I imagined if Arndale thought Alice lost to him, he would the more readily enter into my plans. But how to do this was a puzzler, for I wished Alice to go voluntarily, and thus prevent suspicion from falling on me. In order to bring about this end, I forged a story to frighten her—told her her father was deeply in debt—that I held a mortgage on all he possessed, and had it in my power to ruin him at any moment. I also told her of a crime Sir Hugh had been accused of in early life, but of which he had been proven innocent. I told her I had obtained proof since, which must condemn

him, and that I should certainly proclaim it, unless she consented to come with me. She did not doubt me for a moment—she believed all I said; and not knowing the object I had in view, she consented to accompany me. I had hesitated somewhat about telling the lie; other crimes are common, but a lie is—is—is something a gentleman should not stain his lips with. You all know how she accompanied me. I intended to bring her to Stanton, and secrete her there until Arndale should be married, and then making her promise secrecy as to what had passed, under pain of having her father branded before the world, bring her home. The storm overtook us on the moor; we were obliged to seek shelter in the old Manor. Various circumstances, in which I can now plainly perceive the hand of Providence, obliged me to leave her there. The rest you know.”

“Heaven be praised, dearest Alice, that you are restored!” said Kate, as she gently kissed Alice, who was weeping quietly on her shoulder.

“Let me go home. My poor father, how he must have suffered!” said Alice, rising.

“Ah! that I dared ask him to forgive me!” said the earl, in a tone of remorseful sorrow.

“He will, my lord,” said Alice, gently; “you do not know how kind, how generous, his heart is! He will forgive you with joy.”

“Wretch that I am!” groaned the earl. “Every one, no matter how deeply I have injured them, seems willing to forgive me. Oh! that I were worthy of it!”

“You are, dear uncle,” said Kate. “You repent for what has passed, and shall we not follow the example of the Saviour of mankind, who has said : ‘I forgive you—sin no more.’ Think not so meanly of yourself. Believe me, my dear lord, there are many long days of happiness in store for you yet.”

He shook his head sadly, but said nothing. Alice now bade them adieu for a short period ; and, accompanied by Lord Arndale, set out for the Pines. The joy of Sir Hugh at meeting his daughter was only equaled by his surprise, at learning all the strange events that had transpired, and the sorrow and remorse of his former enemy.

“I forgive him—I forgive him with all my heart,” he exclaimed, warmly. “The joy I feel at again beholding Alice amply consoles me for all I have suffered, and his great griefs have effaced the remembrance of the past. Let me go to him ; ‘tis long since I stood in the old family hall of Dirritole, and in the presence of the dead all shall be forgotten and forgiven.”

It was a sad meeting of those two old men, but joy mingled with their sadness. The ready forgiveness of all around led the earl’s thoughts to hope for pardon from a higher source, and Sir Hugh was happy in the presence of his daughter.

And side by side, in the family vault, those two were laid to sleep the sleep which knows no waking. A plain, black, marble slab, bearing only the simple names, “Walter—Madeline,” marked their last resting-place. And underneath

was the promise of great joy spoken long, long years ago by divine lips :

“ Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN IRISH BALL.

“ This youth is in love, I declare—
How the insect keeps fluttering by !
I think he so loves a young fair,
If she were to frown, he would die !
Do not the poor youth any ill.
If he woos to obtain him a wife ;
As the Bible says, ‘ Thou shalt not kill,’
Say ‘ yes,’ and *transport* him for life.”—*Anon.*

READER, are you willing to leave Dirritole and its inmates behind, and come with me to Dublin to hunt up a certain young gentleman whom we have too long left to his own devices ?

Master Charley Sidney stood before a mirror in his own apartment, putting the finishing touches to a most elaborate toilet, in which he looked most killingly handsome. Stretched on a sofa, smoking a cigar, and leisurely watching the blue smoke as it curled gracefully above his head, was our sometime friend, Sir Henry Dudley. The aid-de-camp was in full evening costume likewise, for, not to keep you any longer in suspense, dear reader, both were going to a ball.

“ I say, Charley,” said Dudley, continuing a conversation which our abrupt entrance has interrupted, “ she is, of all divine, adorable, fascinating, charming girls, the most be-

witching. Such eyes, such lips, such ringlets, and such a foot and ankle; ye gods! I tell you, Sidney, I can't do her justice!"

"Oh, don't trouble yourself," said Charley, "I've heard it all so often, I know it by heart. I wish to heaven you'd tell me her name—duse take this cravat! I can't tie it!—what's her name, Dudley?"

"Shan't tell you," said the aid-de-camp, blowing a whiff of smoke in the face of a marble Venus that Charley had lately purchased.

"Why?"

"Because, firstly—as Dr. Longtongue says—I have promised not to; secondly, you would make fierce love to her and cut me out."

"Honor bright!" said Charley. "Come, Dudley, I am dying to hear it!"

"Couldn't," said Harry, nonchalantly.

"Well, keep it, then," said Charley. "I'll see her to-night and get introduced to her in spite of your teeth. She's from England, you say? Who did she come with?"

"Lady Mary—somebody; I forgot who. If I remember right, I saw her at Dirritole, the night of the ball, long ago—the night I first met your little Yankee cousin."

"Ah, yes, Lady Mary Stafford. By the way, Harry, I would give a trifle to see little Maggie now."

"So would I, said Harry, with a wicked twinkle of his dark eye. "Come, don't be all night fixing that bow. Have pity on the girls. No female heart could withstand your exquisite

ties. Come, Charley, don't make yourself too fascinating."

"I'm at your service," said Charley, drawing on his gloves and taking his hat; "and now for your unknown lady-love."

"Yes; and I'll bet you a dozen of champagne that when you see her you'll be in love with her yourself," said Dudley, as the two young men walked, arm-in-arm, down the street.

"Hardly, I think," said Charley, as his thoughts reverted to Dirritole and Cousin Maggie. "I'm love-proof. By the way, how I wish Fitzgerald was here to-night. He is a splendid fellow, and no mistake. He must find it confoundedly dull in England after the pleasures of our gay capital. That's the chief thing that prevents me from being a soldier. I couldn't stand being ordered here and there in such an unfeeling manner; to be toasting your shins in India one day and the next ordered off to the North Pole or Canada—which, I take it, means about the same thing."

"Not exactly," said Sir Harry. "Canada isn't such a bad place after all. I've seen prettier girls there than I ever saw anywhere else in my life. Not the free and easy, dashing sort of girls we have here in Dublin, nor yet the strong-built, healthy-looking women of England, but the little, slender, blue-eyed, pale-faced fairies that steal into a fellow's heart before he knows where he is."

"Something like your mysterious beauty across the channel," said Charley, puffing vigorously at his cigar.

"Yes—no—not exactly, You see *she's* not so *very* slender, just sufficient *embonpoint* to be charming. I hate your

shingle women—all skin and bones. No ; give me something substantial.

“Something dutch, I suppose?” suggested Charley.

“Yes, but here we are. Now for beauty and bright eyes !”

Both gentlemen dropped their cigars, and entered a rather aristocratic-looking mansion, brilliantly lighted, and sounding with music and laughter.

Being ushered into the drawing-room, Sir Harry separated himself from his friend, and went in search of his lady-love. Charley cast his eyes around ; but nowhere could he see one answering the description given by Sir Harry. Plenty of pretty girls there were ; but none of them strangers to *him*.

The dancing was already at its height, and Charley soon engaged a pretty girl for a quadrille that was forming ; and, in the excitement of the dance, forgot all about Sir Harry and his unknown lady-love. The rooms were filled with officers—some in splendid uniforms—and among them Charley soon failed to recognize his friend.

He had just led his third partner to a seat, and was in the midst of an animated flirtation, when Sir Harry passed him, whispering :

“They’ve come, Charley. Look sharp now !”

Charley gave him a savage scowl at this interruption, and resumed his animated flirtation with the lady. Miss McMahan was the heiress of a country squire—just emancipated from boarding-school—fond of novels and moonlight, and terribly romantic. Captivated by the constant attentions of

the wild but handsome young student, she had surrendered her virgin heart into his keeping at first sight.

“ Upon my soul you’re an angel! a seraph! I never saw such a pair of bewitching eyes before in my life!”

“ Ah! now behave yourself, Mr. Sidney.

“ It’s truth I’m telling you! I adore you, Mary Anne——”

“ My name is Susan, if you please, sir!”

“ So be it. On my honor, Susan, I never saw any one who suited my fancy before in my life!”

“ Ah! now you’re only making fun of me, Mr. Sidney! There, don’t be squeezing my hand that way! There’s Sir Harry Dudley looking!”

“ Oh, confound him! I say, Susan, mayn’t I have the pleasure of calling to see you?”

“ To be sure; I’ll be so glad to see you! Ah! Mr. Sidney, the pleasure I experience in the society of such a refined young man as *you* can’t be described?”

Here the fair Susan sighed, and looked tenderly at Charley.

“ And I,” exclaimed Charley, in a tragic tone, “ I debarred from the charms of female society in the walls of old Trinity, how much more delight will *I* find in the interview. It will be so delightful a relaxation, after the profound study in which I pass my days. That’s a whopper, anyhow ” he muttered to himself.

“ Well, then, come to-morrow evening,” said the fair Susan, with another tender glance.

“ With all my heart. Ah, Susan—how slowly the hours

will drag on till then ; until my eyes shall again be blest by the sight of your lovely face !”

There, now, Mr. Sidney—oh, don’t ; what *will* people say ? There’s somebody coming now ; don’t be putting your arm around my waist.”

Before Charley could gain a more becoming attitude, a lady passed, leaning on the arm of Sir Harry Dudley. He looked up, and sprang to his feet in amazement, as he recognized his *Cousin Maggie*.

That young lady had, however, seen all ; and, evidently unwilling to disturb so tender a scene, with a slight nod of her bright head, and a careless “How d’ye do Charley?” she passed on. There was a wicked twinkle in her eye and a peculiar smile on her lips, that showed how much she enjoyed Charley’s amazement and confusion.

Leaving the fair Susan to console herself as best she might for his departure, he hastened after her ; but she had already disappeared in the crowd, and he was about to return disappointed, when some one tapped him on the shoulder with a fan, and a familiar voice exclaimed :

“Monsieur Charles, *mon cher ami* !”

He glanced around, and his surprise increased at seeing standing before him Bess L’Olise, looking prettier and more coquettish than ever.

“Why, Bess, can I believe my eyes ?—*you* here ?” exclaimed Charley, thunder-struck.

“To be sure. What is there so very wonderful in that ?” said Bess, with a roughish smile.

"But—why, you and Maggie are the last persons I ever expected to see here," said Mr. Sidney, still completely at a loss.

"Ah, then, you've seen Miss Nelson? Who was with her?"

"Sir Harry Dudley," said Charley.

"Ah, indeed!" said Bess, with a meaning smile.

"When did you arrive? What brought you here? How came *he* to be so intimate with my cousin!" said Charley, beginning to feel very uncomfortable.

"Didn't he tell you?"

"Tell *me*? No. He knew then?"

"To be sure he did. I thought he told you. Maggie told *him* all the particulars."

"She did?" said Charley, bitterly; "she seems to be very good friends with him of late!"

"So she is—*very* good friends," and Bess's wicked eyes actually flashed with suppressed mirth.

"How long have you been Dublin?"

"About a fortnight. We came with Lady Mary Stafford."

"And Sir Harry Dudley has been a constant visitor since, I presume?"

"*Ma foi!* yes, he is never away. He is a terrible bore, *I* think; but Miss Maggie seems to think that there is no one like him in the world."

A sudden pang shot through Charley's heart at the words.

"Dear me! Mr. Charles, how pale you look!" said the wicked Bess: "had you not better step out and take the air?"

"And why did you not let me know you were here? Why

did she tell it to a stranger instead of her cousin? Why did she make him promise not to tell me?" demanded Charley, impetuously.

"Ah! Mr. Sidney, how can you ask so many questions at once?" said the unconcerned little Parisian. "Let's see: 'Why did I not let you know we were here?' Well, because Miss Maggie said she couldn't have you tagging round after her; that you were a horrid bore; and that Sir Henry Dudley was twice as nice. So, of course, *I* couldn't gainsay her, whatever I might *think*. Next: 'Why did she tell it to a stranger instead of her cousin?' I really cannot say positively, but I think she doesn't consider him *quite* a stranger—at least, I fancy he won't be long so! Last, 'Why did she make him promise not to tell you?' Why, she said you would be sure to tease her life out; and that she was heartily tired of you while in England. So, there!"

Charley's lips were so bitterly compressed, and he looked so pale, that even the mischievous Bess felt a little sorry. She passed her arm through his, and drew him mechanically with her to the conservatory.

"You see, Mr. Charles," she said, in a more serious tone, "after you left, and Miss Kate, and the earl, it was horrid lonesome at Dirritole. Poor Miss Maggie used to go moping over the house, as she said herself, 'like a poor old tabby-cat with the bronchitis;' and as I was terribly lonely, too, after Miss Alice and Janie, we became friends in affliction, and poured our mutual troubles into each other's ears. Well, at last, Lady Mary Stafford took pity on us; and, as she was

coming to visit a friend in Dublin, she urged Maggie to come with her. Miss Nelson was delighted at the prospect ; but as we had become very much attached to each other, she would not go without me. You see, Mr. Charles, there is nothing like affliction to make people bosom friends. So Lady Mary kindly coaxed me to come, too ; and so we arrived here ; and Sir Harry made himself our knight ; and—that's all."

"And enough, too, to blight all the hopes of my life-time," said Charley, bitterly. "Heartless coquette! she knew I loved her ; and yet she could laugh at me with her new lover. And *he*—I would have staked my life on his honor and friendship—*friendship!* oh, yes! he is a most honorable friend ;" and he laughed bitterly.

"Poor, dear, drooping Susan! have you left her to wear the willow?" said the voice of Maggie, in a tone of mock sympathy, as she flitted past them, and left the conservatory by an opposite door.

He made a step after her as though he would follow and plead his cause, but pride restrained him.

"No ; let her go—she would not believe me, he muttered ; "let her go, and laugh with her lover over the taunt. I am no whining sycophant to fawn for her favor!"

He leaned his head on his hand, and gazed steadily out.

"After all," said Bess, who really felt sorry for the wound she saw had been inflicted, "things may not be as bad as they look. Before morning dawns, you know night is ever darkest. Who knows, even though all looks dark now, but morning may dawn yet?"

“Not for me,” said Charley, coldly. “I shall never plead for her favor; I leave that for Sir Harry Dudley—my very dear friend,” and he smiled scornfully. “I thank you, Bess, for your candor, rest assured, and shall never give Miss Nelson reason to complain of being bored by me again. Good-night,” he bowed, and was gone before Bess could recover from her surprise, sufficiently to detain him.

“Heigho!” said Bess, looking after him, with something between a smile and a sigh; “poor fellow! it’s a pity, too. What *will* Maggie say when I tell her? He’s a handsome fellow, too; what splendid eyes he has? I wonder if he will see her before she goes! Heaven! he’s deeper in love than I thought. What fools it makes of the best of us!” And with this wise conclusion, to which graver heads than hers had often come before, and will come to again to the end of the chapter, Bess quitted the conservatory.

When Charley left her, he strolled rapidly through the rooms for a few moments, in the hope of meeting the hostess, to pay his respects before leaving. As he was passing through the drawing-room, his eye fell on a couple, sitting within the shadow of a deep bay-window. He needed no second glance to tell him who they were. Sir Henry was in the act of raising her hand to his lips. The sight seemed to send a sudden pang to his heart, yet he was too proud to let it be seen. With a scornful smile on his lip, he passed on.

Maggie suddenly looked up, and meeting his eyes, colored to the temples. He bowed coldly, and, with the same con-

temptuous smile, passed them, and went out. Half an hour after, he sat in his own apartments, while his servant was busily engaged in packing his luggage for immediate departure for England.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOME AGAIN.

“Clouds turn with every wind about;
They keep us in suspense and doubt;
Yet oft perverse, like womankind,
Are seen to scud against the wind,
Is not this lady just the same?
For who can tell what is her aim.”—*Swift*.

“LETTERS for you, Misther Charley,” said the *valet-de-chambre* of Mr. Sidney, entering his room, a few minutes after his return, with a package in his hand.

Charley took them. There were only two, one from Kate and the other from Fitzgerald, who, a short time before, had been ordered to England. Leaving, in true brotherly fashion, Kate’s for the last, he opened the dragoon’s, and read :

“DEAR CHARLEY :—If you look at the date of this letter (which I suppose you won’t, unless you are told beforehand,) you will see I am at present, domesticated at Dirritole. Faith, Charley! it is a perfect paradise of a place. How you ever came to leave it is, I must confess, beyond me entirely. To be sure, there is not much fun, but there is capital shooting, and I keep the table pretty well supplied. There is a *game* of another kind, too—a most charming maiden lady; somewhat antiquated, I must confess, but all the wiser for that. Her name is Miss Dickett. I suppose you know her. She knows *you*, however; and Heaven help you if all the stories she tells about you be true! You must have an uneasy conscience of your own. I made fierce love to her from the first moment of my arrival; and she folds her

arms and solemnly assures me that 'Hit's all very fine—so hit is;' but, confound it, I don't seem to make the least impression on her heart. She is not half so easily courted as Miss Peggy O'Flaherty—a lady I knew once. Eh! Charley?

"I suppose, now, you are puzzling your brains to find out what drove me to Dirritole. Well, you see, I met Lord Arndale (capital fellow he is, too) shortly after my arrival; and, as he and I were fast friends 'once upon a time,' at Eton, he told me a melancholy story about his lady-love being carried off to some unknown region by a 'person or persons unknown,' as the coroner says, when he brings in a verdict of murder. Shortly after that I lost sight of him for a while; but the other day he wrote me a letter, saying all was as right as a trivet again—that Miss Desmond (who, by the way, is dused pretty,) had turned up again, and begging me to come immediately to Dirritole. Of course I complied; and here I am, 'I came, I saw, I conquered.' No, I didn't conquer, either—Miss Dickett holds out still,

"I think, Charley, Arndale has some notion of getting married soon, and wants me to keep him in countenance. It is an awful thing to do, Charley—to be launched into matrimony without even a friend to drop a tear of pity! But, alas! my feelings will not allow me to dwell on this melancholy theme, or I might make many touching reflections upon it, which might be of service to you in the future.

"The earl is rather a serious old gentleman; but that is occasioned by the recent loss of his wife. What a lovely creature she must have been! I have seen her portrait.

"I cannot think of anything else just now to say, except that Miss Dickett has begged me, with tears in her eyes (caused by recently peeling onions), to warn you against associating with them 'Hirish, which is too vulgar to be looked at.' I use her own touching words; let them make a due impression upon you.

"Give my love to Peggy O'Flaherty and her brother Mickey, and write soon to

Yours, etc.,

"MAURICE FITZGERALD."

"By the way, Charley, what a spicy little piece of womanhood that sister of yours is. She cross-questioned me as closely as a Sessions lawyer about you. Heaven forgive me for all the lies I had to tell her. Well, *nabocklish*.

M. F."

“Talk of the pith of a woman’s letter being in the postscript,” muttered Charley, “the first sentence in his explains the secret attraction of Dirritole. Now then for Kate’s,”

He tore it open, and read :

“MY DEAR BROTHER :—I have been so busy, and passed through so many troubles of late, that I could not find time to write to you. I suppose you have heard the countess is dead, poor Aunt Madeline! her story was a sad one; but she has found rest at last.

“‘After a storm there cometh a calm,’ as they say, and so it is with us. After all our troubles, we have settled down at Dirritole, in peace, once more. The earl bears the loss of his wife better than I thought he would; he is growing quite resigned, and has changed so, you would hardly know him.

‘I suppose you have seen Maggie Nelson in Dublin, Poor wild Maggie! Dirritole was a lonely place for her. She’s a dear, good-hearted little creature, after all. I hope some day to bear a nearer relationship to her than that of cousin, Shall I not, dear Charley?’

Charley’s face flushed hotly, and then grew pale, as he again resumed the letter.

“There is a light dragoon, a dashing, handsome young man, staying here now. I must confess Dirritole would be intolerably dull, were it not for him; he is a most amusing person. He seems to know you very well, and speaks highly of the diligence with which you pursue your studies. I am delighted to hear it, for I confess I had my doubts.’

“Can you not obtain leave and come home for a few weeks, at least, until after Harry is married. Do try, Charley, and believe me, none will be happier to see you again than your affectionate sister,

“KATE.”

Charley threw down the letter, and began pacing the floor rapidly, up and down. Kate’s request would furnish him with an excuse for returning to Dirritole, and the real cause would never be suspected. Sitting down, he hastily indited

a note to the heads of the college, saying, he was obliged to return immediately to England.

Morning found him on the deck of a steamer, leaving the green shores of Erin far behind. His face was pale, and the dark circles under his eyes betokened a sleepless night.

Kate's words were gall and wormwood to his wounded heart. Once he, too, had hoped to call Maggie by a dearer name than that of cousin, but that hope was gone now. How should he meet the many questions concerning her, which Kate would be sure to ask him, when the very mention of her name nearly drove him wild? He paced up and down the deck, with rapid, nervous strides, while the other passengers gazed on him, wondering to one another, if that pale, wild-looking young man, hadn't broken loose from some jail or lunatic asylum. And, indeed, his excited manner gave sufficient grounds for such a conclusion.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“LAST SCENE OF ALL.”

“Come, let us now resolve at last,
To live and love in quiet;
We'll tie the knot so very fast,
That time shall ne'er untie it.

When least I seemed concerned, I took
No pleasure, nor no rest;
And when I feigned an angry look,
Alas! I loved you best.”—*Buckinghamshire.*

CHARLEY'S welcome to Dirritole was a warm one, but all saw that something lay heavily on his spirits. The happy, joyous look that had once been his, was gone, and in its place a deep-settled melancholy took possession of his mind. He would sit for hours gazing idly on vacancy; then, as if something within made him resolve to shake off the lethargy that lay on him, he would become suddenly gay, and go off with Fitzgerald and Lord Arndale, the happiest of the happy, apparently. But it was easily seen his mirth was forced, there was a hollow echo in his gayest laugh, a care-worn look on his once gay, careless young face, that betrayed the cancer-worm at the core of all. Poor Charley! do what he would, Maggie still held undisputed sway in his heart.

To most of the family he became a puzzle. Fitzgerald and Arndale recommended a change of diet, saying they

thought he showed symptoms of apoplexy ; sometimes, when he became unusually moody, going so far as to advise a strait-jacket. Miss Dickett asserted that she “allers knowed it would happen, living among them wulger Hirish, and the earl looking pityingly upon him, saying :

“Poor fellow ! he has studied so hard of late, he is losing health !”

Kate, with the true instinct of womanhood, guessed the truth. Several times she ventured to approach the subject, but on these occasions Charley invariably answered with impatient petulance, very unlike his former easy good-nature. And if she persisted in probing the wound, he invariably got up and walked out of the room.

At last Kate resolved to write to Maggie for an explanation. An answer soon came—a very long epistle it was too. What it contained nobody could tell, but it must have been satisfactory, for a smile broke over Kate’s face as she uttered a very prolonged “oh !” and exclaimed when she finished it :

“This explains all. What a little torment Maggie is ! Poor Charley !”

Her tone was sympathetic, but the laugh which accompanied it did not seem to say he was much to be pitied. Had Charley known she was laughing at him he would undoubtedly have been very indignant.

It was a balmy, pleasant afternoon. The windows of the old Mansion at Dirritole were wide open to allow ingress to the light breeze. Lord Arndale and Fitzgerald were off in the woods with their dogs and guns. The earl sat dozing in

his arm-chair, for the trials of the past months had rendered him a feeble old man. Little Magdalen lay under the shade of an old oak in the park, with her arms around the neck of Prince, her favorite water-spaniel, gazing dreamily up at the patches of blue sky which she could see through the leaves. Miss Dickett was marching in stately dignity through the house, brush in hand, pursuing with unrelenting vengeance every cobweb and speck of dust, and dusting and brushing with the grim determination of learning all spiders and other "noxshis insex" that she was not to be trifled with.

Suddenly a carriage drove up the long avenue in front, and a young lady closely veiled entered. She ran lightly up the steps, entered the parlor, and was clasped in the arms of Kate. Throwing back her veil, the new-comer disclosed the pretty features of Maggie Nelson.

"Have you told him, Kate?" said Maggie, as she threw off her bonnet and shawl.

"Not a word," said Kate, smiling. "I left that for you."

"Where is he now?" inquired Maggie.

"Up-stairs in the library."

Without waiting to hear more, Maggie darted off and ran up-stairs. She softly opened the library door, and then stood, hesitatingly, whether to advance or retreat.

Charley lay on his face on a lounge at the farther end of the room. For a moment she stood still, then went softly over on tiptoe and stood beside him. A little hand was laid lightly on his shoulder, and a half sob fell on his ear.

He looked up.

“Maggie!” he exclaimed.

“Yes. Oh! dear Charley, do forgive me,” sobbed poor Maggie, clasping her arm around his neck.

He grew very pale; and Maggie could feel his heart beating wildly against her side; but he resolutely put up his hands, and strove to unclasp her encircling arms.

“Oh, Charley, don’t, *don’t* send me away; I’ll never do it again, ’pon my word I won’t!” sobbed Maggie, still clinging to him.

“I cannot, Maggie, I *cannot*!” he exclaimed, bitterly; “why have you come again to drive me wild? Go, leave me—what *would* Sir Harry Dudley say?”

“I don’t care one pin for him, indeed I don’t, he’s only a hateful, empty-headed, brainless dandy, and I *hate* him!” said Maggie, still sobbing.

“And *I* suppose you have often spoken of me like this, when clinging to his neck!” exclaimed Charley scornfully.

“No, never; and I don’t cling to his neck either!” said Maggie, a little indignantly. “I ain’t in the habit of embracing other people’s *husbands*!”

“Husbands?” repeated Charley; “who said anything about husbands?”

“You did!” said Maggie, “you said I clung to their necks, and I don’t thank you for it, either. The next time I cling to yours, you will tell me of it, I guess—so there!” and Maggie folded her arms properly, and drew herself up with dignity.

“But, Maggie, I don’t understand; how can you call

Dudley a husband?" said Charley, looking completely mystified.

"Because he's married, and men are generally called husbands when they're married," said Maggie.

"Why—how—what—Sir Harry Dudley married?" exclaimed Charley; "for Heaven's sake to whom?"

"To Bess L'Olise!" said Maggie.

"*Wha-a-a-t!*" exclaimed Charley, prolonging the word infinitely in his amazement; "you are surely joking, Maggie?"

"I'm not. Read *that* if you won't believe *me*," and Maggie drew a newspaper from her pocket, and handed it to him.

Charley took the paper, and read:

"MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.—By the Rev, Dr. Mooney, Sir Henry Dudley, late of His Majesty's Dragoons, to Miss Bess L'Olise."

"Then you will not marry him. Hurrah! I'm the happiest fellow in England."

And in the excitement of his new-found joy, Charley caught Maggie in his arms, and went whirling her round the room in a sort of hysterical waltz.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Maggie, completely out of breath, for not expecting this sudden assault, she was taken altogether by surprise. "Good gracious, Charley Sidney, are you crazy? Oh, sir, do stop, you're mussing my collar dreadfully. Oh-oh-oh-oh!" and panting and breathless, Charley whirled her to the sofa, and took a seat beside her.

"Well, now, if *that's* not pretty conduct! Ain't you

ashamed of yourself, Charley Sidney?" exclaimed Maggie, indignantly, as soon as she recovered breath to speak. I declare I'll never speak to you again, for your impertinence!"

"Oh, now, Maggie," said Charley, in a penitent tone, putting his arm around her waist, "you wouldn't be so cruel! What did Bess L'Olise, or Lady Dudley, I suppose I should say, mean by all that story about you and Sir Harry? And he, I saw him kiss your hand that night of the ball. Come, explain, Maggie, I'm awfully in the dark."

"And awfully jealous, eh, Charley!" said Maggie, laughing.

"Oh, no, not now, but I'm dying to hear. Go on, Maggie."

Well, you know," said Maggie, "first I only wanted to tease you a little, so I told Dudley not to tell you we were in Dublin. It wasn't because I cared a straw for him—no, indeed, I didn't like him a bit better than the night I met him here first."

"But he went to see you every day," interposed Charley.

"La, no, he didn't come to see me!" said Maggie; "it was to see Bess; he fell in love with her and she with him at first sight. It was awful sudden—just like the small-pox."

Charley laughed at the odd comparison and Maggie went on:

"The night of the ball I intended being quite sociable with you, but when I saw how you devoted yourself to that girl I just got mad, and I told Bess and Sir Harry I'd pay you off for it. So I got Bess to tell you all that story, and see how

you would take it. You see I thought you didn't care anything for me, or you would not have paid so much attention to that other, but I wanted to be sure. Well, she told you, and when you left her in the conservatory she came and told us; and when I heard how much you were grieved, I felt half sorry. Just then Sir Harry saw you coming, and, wishing to carry on the deception Bess had begun, he lifted my hand to his lips. I couldn't help blushing when you saw me, you looked so scornful—more like an insulted prince than an every-day Christian. Then the next day I sent a note with Sir Harry to your rooms, explaining all and begging your forgiveness, but he came back with it and told me you were gone. I am not going to tell you how I felt then, because it would make you too vain—anyway, I didn't feel a bit comfortable, and I felt mad at you, too, for going off in such a hurry without giving a body time to explain. I didn't very well know what to do for a while, until Kate wrote to me, saying you were moping around Dirritole like an old hen that had lost her last chicken, and begging me to come right home. So I only waited long enough to be brides-maid for Bess, and then I came straight back. And now I hope you're satisfied, and I must request of you to go right down on your knees and beg my pardon for that impudent speech about my clinging to Sir Harry Dudley's neck. It was real mean of you—so there!"

How Charley made up friends with her we are not prepared to say. All we know is, that he *did* make up friends with her; and soon after, much to the surprise of everybody ex-

cept Kate, concluded he wouldn't go back to Dublin any more, but would follow the Scriptural injunction, and take unto himself a wife, on the same day which made Lord Arndale the husband of Alice Desmond.

There was still another surprise awaiting the happy household, when Fitzgerald one morning stood before the earl, and, in a frank, manly speech, requested the hand of Kate. The earl was astonished, but said he had no objection, provided that young lady herself was satisfied.

Kate's answer must have been satisfactory, though she only blushed, and said something in a very low tone of voice ; whereupon Fitzgerald and Kate very dutifully knelt at his feet, and the earl blessed them in quite a fatherly manner.

There were three weddings in one day at Dirritole shortly after that ; and never before, nor since, were such doings heard of as at the old mansion. Nothing was talked of, for miles aorund, but the great goings on at Dirritole. All the county were assembled on the lawn in front of the mansion, where they feasted and danced until the day grew red in the east.

Sir Harry and Lady Dudley came to Dirritole to honor the nuptials with their presence. And a very pretty sight it was to see those four brides—all looking so pretty, so happy, and so interesting.

Immediately after the wedding, all started for a tour on the Continent ; and when they returned, they brought with them John and his faithful Janie—now man and wife—for whom Lord Arndale never ceased making inquiry, until they were found out. The joy of the good Janie at seeing her be-

loved young lady well and happy, and the wife of Lord Arndale, knew no bounds ; and she nearly went wild with delight at learning of the good fortune of her step-sister.

Shortly after their return, the earl passed peacefully away ; and Lord Arndale—now Earl of Danemore—together with his countess, took up their residence in the dear old family mansion of Dirritole. Sir Hugh, who came to reside with his daughter, gave up the Pines to Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald ; and both Kate and Alice were delighted at being settled so near to one another.

Sir Harry and Lady Dudley went to reside in his family mansion, taking with him Bess's mother—the old steward having gone the way of all flesh some months before.

John and Janie were comfortably provided for by their numerous wealthy relations and friends, and passed the remainder of their lives as happily as the former part had been troubled and stormy.

And Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sidney—how shall we take leave of *them* ? Charley and Maggie settled down astonishingly after marriage, and spent most of their time in Dublin, to which city Charley was very much attached.

Marie Nelson passed the remainder of her days at Dirritole, or *Dirty Hole*, as her sable attendant persisted in calling it, in spite of all corrections. Here, studying out several new forms of disease to which she believed herself a martyr, the worthy lady passed her time very pleasantly.

Miss Dickett still remained presiding goddess of the mysteries of housekeeping, under the new earl and countess.

When quizzed by Fitzgerald—who solemnly asserted he had no peace with Kate, she was so jealous of the days he had formerly spent trying to win Miss Dickett's heart—the offended housekeeper would fold her arms with dignity, and repeat :

“ Hit is all wery fine—so it is.”

Old Moll resided with Kate, to whom she was extremely attached ; and every few months, while she lived, she still paid a visit to the old Moor Manor, as a sort of homage to the memory of her beloved master.

And when the merry Christmas times came, the great parlors of Dirritole were filled with *such* a crowd—little Dudleys, Bessys, and Harrys ; little Sidneys, Charleys, and Maggies ; little Fitzgeralds, Maurices, and Kates ; and the little Harrys and Alices, of the earl and countess. A happy household they formed, as they assembled every year ; and none among them ever grew up more beautiful or more beloved than the little dark-eyed, gentle orphan, Magdalen.

[THE END.]

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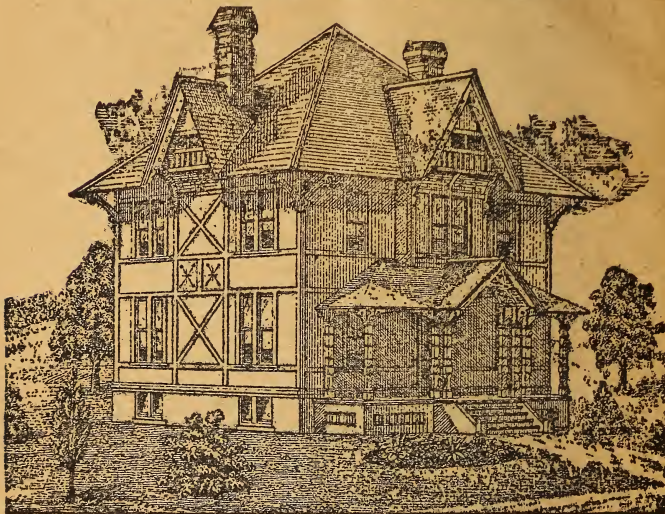
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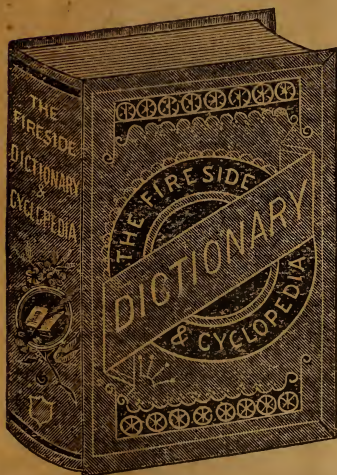
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